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John. Milton

The Riverside Literature Series

MINOR POEMS

BY

JOHN MILTON

WITH NOTES FOR CAREFUL STUDY

BY

CLAUDE M. FUESS, PH. D.

INSTRUCTOR IN ENGLISH, PHILLIPS ACADEMY
ANDOVER, MASS.

AND SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

BY

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

THE character of John Milton presents an unusual combination of two elements seldom found together in the same person: a Renaissance passion for beauty in both nature and art, and a Puritan zeal for reform in matters of morals and religion. His career, too, is an equally singular alternation of the contemplative with the active life. Until he was well over thirty, circumstances joined to favor him in maintaining that studious ease which, in his case, fostered a native inclination towards scholarship and poetry. Living as a boy almost "within the spacious times of great Elizabeth," he could hardly fail to be stimulated by the men and the atmosphere around him. Shakespeare himself was alive until 1616, when Milton was eight years old; and sturdy Ben Jonson must often have walked with his "sons" past the Milton home on his way to the Mermaid Tavern in the same street. In school and university there was little to disturb the smooth current of Milton's daily routine, and for nearly six years after he left Cambridge he remained quietly in the country, training himself seriously in writing, preparing consciously for the lofty poetic mission to which he had already dedicated himself. During this first period he seems like an untroubled child of the Renaissance, a genuine Elizabethan, belated, it is true, but nevertheless with much of the free and joyous spirit of that splendid age. Then the change came. The breach between Puritan and Cavalier, imminent since the accession of Charles I in 1625, gradually widened, and Milton, idealist in religion and government as he had shown himself to be in art, returned from Italy to cast in his fortunes with the Parliamentarians. For nearly twenty years the poet of *Comus*, forsaking deliberately all his former pursuits and entering energetically

into public life, devoted himself largely to theological and political controversy. Into the momentous problems of his century he threw himself body and soul, laboring to support the Commonwealth until he lost his eyesight in the effort. Then the restoration of Charles II in 1660 once more altered conditions, and Milton was left, blind and proscribed, to resume in old age the high calling of his youth, with a nature, however, strengthened and ennobled by his two decades of public service. The desire for artistic perfection which he had shown in his early poems was ultimately blended with the stern mood which he had displayed while holding office under Cromwell; it was as if, in *Paradise Lost*, the spirits of Raphael and Luther had been united to make an immortal epic.

The story of Milton's life, then, may be simplified by a rough division into three distinct periods, each complete in itself and each productive of some remarkable literary work. From 1608 to 1640, the years of his apprenticeship, he composed the admirable minor poems included in this volume; from 1640 to 1660, during the Civil War and the Commonwealth, he was occupied chiefly with prose pamphlets on burning issues of Church and State; and from 1660 to 1674 he was the author of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*.

John Milton was born in London on November 9, 1608. His father, also named John Milton, after having been disinherited by his Catholic parents for turning Protestant, had become a scrivener or notary with a prosperous business. He was an accomplished musician, a reader of poetry, and a man of culture and earnest piety. He was willing and able, moreover, to give his son the best education his day and station afforded. The boy, accordingly, was placed first under a private tutor, a Puritan clergyman, Thomas Young, and was sent later to St. Paul's School, where he took courses in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and was taught besides to read and speak French and Italian. He was at this time fond of English poetry, especially of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, which had appeared in 1590. According to

his own testimony he was a studious child, so eager for reading that after his twelfth year he rarely left his books before midnight. At St. Paul's he formed an intimacy with Charles Diodati, a young Englishman of Italian descent, whose early death in 1638 he afterwards bewailed in his Latin *Epitaphium Damonis*.

On April 9, 1625, Milton matriculated at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he remained until 1632, taking the degrees both of Bachelor and Master of Arts. In many respects he was not in sympathy with his university, and some trouble with his tutor, Chappell, apparently caused the undergraduate a temporary rustication. His comrades named him "the Lady of Christ's," possibly because of his handsome face, possibly also because of his fastidious tastes and the purity of his life. He was undoubtedly reserved and haughtily independent; for already he believed himself destined for great achievement as a poet, and he was persuaded that only austere living and unsullied integrity could prepare him for his future. Numerous Latin verses and some English poems composed at this time indicate that he had begun to "meditate the thankless Muse." The *Hymn on the Nativity*, written when he was barely twenty-one, is more than promising in its careful workmanship. Most significant of all, however, was the well-known sonnet *On His Being Arrived to the Age of Twenty-three*, which concludes with his decision to live, wherever he may be, —

"As ever in my great Task-Master's eye."

Although Milton had originally planned to enter the Church, he was resolved by the time his university days were over that "he who would take orders must subscribe himself slave." Fortunately his father recognized his son's genius and was ready to indulge his wishes; so the young graduate lived during most of the next six years at the family country-seat at Horton, about seventeen miles southeast of London and only four miles from Windsor Castle. Here, as he says, he "spent a long holiday turning over the

Greek and Latin authors," reading widely in his own and other literatures, making frequent visits to London for the study of music and mathematics, — in general, storing his intellect, patiently biding his time, and, as he wrote Diodati, growing his wings for a flight. At this period he was an occasional rather than a prolific poet. It was, however, during this uneventful, but by no means indolent, seclusion that he wrote the work comprised in this edition: *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. These in themselves would have given him a ranking among the finest of English poets. Throughout they are distinguished by discriminating taste, gracefulness of style, and perfection of form; and in *Comus* and *Lycidas* a deeper note is sometimes struck, indicating that Milton, with his leanings towards Presbyterianism, was being stirred to profound reflection by the proceedings of Archbishop Laud and the High Church party.

In the spring of 1638, Milton's father, with his customary generosity, allowed his son to take the "grand tour," then fashionable as a finishing touch to education. Well provided with letters of introduction, he stopped for a few weeks in Paris and then moved on to Italy, where, in Florence and Rome, he met many prominent Italians, including Manso and Galileo. Further plans for a journey to Greece were interrupted by the news, which reached him in Naples, of the open rupture between Charles I and the Scotch. Milton's interest in troubles of State may be judged by the fact that, although he was then officially unknown and uninfluential, he gave up his projected voyage and returned shortly after to England.

For some time, however, an opportunity to take part in public affairs did not arise. On his arrival in London in August, 1639, he turned to school teaching as an occupation, his first pupils being his nephews, John and Edward Phillips. But in reality the whole course of his life had changed. He had made up his mind that it was his duty to defend openly the principles which he held, and accordingly he was engaged during a large part of the next twenty

years in writing prose pamphlets upholding the "three species of liberty which are essential to the happiness of social life — religious, domestic, and civil." He commenced in 1641 by publishing his *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England*, the first of five polemics assailing the Episcopal type of church government. The matter of these papers was principally controversial, and Milton did not shrink from the most coarse and scurrilous abuse of those opposed to him in doctrine. There are few sharper contrasts in any man's work than that between the delicate verse of *L'Allegro* and the vigorous invective of certain of these ecclesiastical tracts.

In the spring of 1643, while hostilities were actually beginning, Milton went to Oxfordshire on business and came back a month later bringing with him as his bride, Mary Powell, the daughter of one of his father's debtors. The whole affair has puzzled the biographers. It is certain, however, that she was seventeen and a royalist at heart, and that Milton was thirty-five and an unbending Puritan. It is not strange, perhaps, that they were uncongenial and that she left him after a few weeks to return to her family. Milton retaliated by writing *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, published on August 1, 1643, directly after his wife's departure. Three other tractates on the same subject followed in rapid succession, each arguing powerfully for the granting of divorce on the ground of incompatibility of temperament. In 1645, when the royalists were losing ground, some kind of a reconciliation was arranged, and she lived with Milton until her death in 1652, bearing him three daughters.

Meantime Milton had become enthusiastically active in other fields. He had printed in 1644 his highly idealistic and thoroughly unpractical essay *Of Education*, and in the same year appeared his *Areopagitica*, the best known of his prose works, an elaborate plea for freedom of the press. His school had been increasing steadily in numbers, but in 1647, after the death of his father, his income was considerably augmented, and he therefore gave up his pupils and

settled with his family in a larger house. In short order after the beheading of Charles I on January 30, 1649, Milton produced a pamphlet called *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, in which he undertook to justify the execution of the king. His zeal was rewarded by an appointment as Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Commonwealth, his duties being not only to carry on official correspondence, but also to respond to the attacks then being made all over Europe on Cromwell and his government. His first important task was to counteract the influence of a famous book, *Eikon Basilike*, alleged to have been composed by the late monarch during his imprisonment; Milton replied with *Eikonoklastes*, a severe and savage arraignment of royalists in general. A Latin *Defense of the King* now appeared, instigated by the exiled Charles II, but written by Salmasius, a distinguished Dutch scholar; and Milton, in attempting to overwhelm his adversary, disregarded the advice of his physician with regard to his eyes. His Latin *Pro Populo Anglicano*, published in 1651, was conclusive both in argument and vituperation, but the victory cost him his eyesight, and after March, 1652, he was totally blind. He still, however, retained his position, assistants being employed to help him.

In 1652 his wife died, and in 1656 he married Catharine Woodcock, who lived only fifteen months. She is commemorated in the fine sonnet *On His Deceased Wife*. In 1663 Milton was married for a third time, his wife being Elizabeth Minshull, who proved to be a faithful helpmate. She survived him for fifty-three years, dying in 1727.

The literary product of this period from 1640 to 1660 includes some twenty-five prose pamphlets, four of which are in Latin, and several sonnets. Of these sonnets the best are the well-known *On His Blindness* (1652), concluding with the line, "They also serve who only stand and wait"; and *On the Late Massacre in Piemont* (1655), which is probably the most powerful sonnet in English. In the prose papers Milton, as he himself recognized, was using only his left hand; but passages in them

here and there have a resounding harmony like that of organ music.

The Restoration of Charles II in 1660 naturally deprived Milton of his office and drove him into hiding; but, although his writings were burned by the common hangman, he was able himself to escape injury and imprisonment by the payment merely of some rather heavy fees. It was inevitable under the circumstances that a man of his temperament should consider resuming the plan of his youth for the composition of a great poem. As early as 1640 he had projected a drama on the theme of the fall of man, and he had probably begun his epic some time before 1660. Now, with the enforced aid of his three daughters as copyists, he was prepared to carry the design through, dictating during the fall and winter months only. Although it was completed by 1665, the great fire and plague of 1666 delayed its publication, and *Paradise Lost* did not appear until 1667.

Paradise Lost is an epic in blank verse, dealing with the creation and the fall of man, and having as its chief figure the rebel angel, Satan. In vastness of conception, in richness and and variety of versification, and in massive strength and sublimity, it is one of the glories of English literature, and its author has through it a place among the supreme world poets, — Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe.

At the suggestion of his Quaker friend, Thomas Ellwood, Milton supplemented *Paradise Lost* with *Paradise Regained*, which, in four books, relates the story of Christ's temptation in the wilderness. This, with *Samson Agonistes*, a drama on Greek models, was published in 1671. Between Milton and Samson there are obvious resemblances in character and fate; and the Puritan poet, blind and reduced in fortune, could hardly help feeling sympathy with Samson, also sightless and among his enemies, the Philistines.

In his last years Milton was afflicted with the gout, but he busied himself with some minor tasks: a History of

Britain, an *Art of Logic*, and some epistles and tracts. He lived quietly at his home in Artillery Walk, receiving friends from time to time, spending many hours daily at his organ, and listening to his wife's singing. Dryden, the representative poet of the new age, asked leave to turn *Paradise Lost* into rhyme, and Milton somewhat contemptuously gave him leave to "tag his verses." Finally on November 8, 1674, the end came. He was buried in the chancel of the Church of St. Giles, near Cripplegate.

Milton was a courageous, resolute man of high ideals, unswerving in his devotion to duty and uncompromising in his opinions. He was not always amiable or adaptable; moreover, he lacked a sense of humor, and he was not infrequently disagreeably intolerant. He was, however, emphatically masculine in his character. He seems to have been recognized by every one, from his university days on, as an extraordinary personage, and his stern and self-confident nature impressed even his intimate acquaintances with awe.

As a writer he was, at least in his poetry, a consummate craftsman, seeking and attaining perfection of form as few before his time or since have done. He is always at his best, with his singing robes about him; he has little inferior work, except that done in his boyhood. The soaring stretch of his imagination, his marvelous command of verbal melody, his unerring instinct for the accurate and suggestive word, his superb constructive power, — these are the qualities which make him a supreme poet. We may not love John Milton as a man; we may even shrink from certain phases of his austere character; but we can never cease from paying him unstinted admiration and honor as "the great idealist of our Anglo-Saxon race."

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

SOME knowledge of the social, political, and ecclesiastical conditions in the England of Milton's time will be of much assistance to the student in understanding these *Minor Poems*. Such a sketch as that in Green's *Short History of England*, chapter VIII, gives a reasonably full account of the period from 1603 to 1689, with some discussion of Milton himself. Milton's life and times are treated in great detail by Masson in his *Life of Milton*, a monumental work in six volumes, indispensable to any one making a thorough study of the subject. A copy of Milton's complete works, such as that edited by William Vaughn Moody in the Cambridge Edition, should be within easy access of every student.

Among the various shorter essays and biographies dealing with Milton, the following are likely to prove profitable reading: —

Dr. Johnson: — *Life of Milton* (in his *Lives of the Poets*).
Macaulay: — *Essay on Milton* (in his *Essays*, volume I).
Bagehot: — *John Milton* (in his *Literary Studies*, volume I).
Lowell: — *Essay on Milton* (in his *Among my Books*).
Dowden: — *John Milton* (in his *Transcripts and Studies*).
Arnold: — *John Milton* (in his *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series).
Pattison: — *John Milton* (English Men of Letters Series).
Garnett: — *John Milton* (Great Writers Series).
Trent: — *John Milton: A Short Study of his Life and Works.*
Saintsbury: — *Milton* (in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, volume VIII. chapter 5).

L' ALLEGRO

HENCE, loathèd Melancholy,
  Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn,
  'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy!
Find out some uncouth cell,
  Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
  There under ebon shades, and low-browed rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
  In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come, thou Goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclep'd Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,
With two sister Graces more
To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore;
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic Wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying,
There on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.
  Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,

Quips, and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
Nods, and Becks, and wreathèd Smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as ye go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty;
And, if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreprovèd pleasures free;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled Dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock with lively din
Scatters the rear of Darkness thin;
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering Morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,

Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight:
While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip round it measures:
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied;
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide.
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead.

Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid
Dancing in the chequered shade;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How fairy Mab the junkets eat:
She was pinched and pulled, she said;
And he, by Friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging Goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end;
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend,
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of Knights and Barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of Ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize

Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful Poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learnèd sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes with many a winding bout
Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

IL PENSEROSO

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,
  The brood of Folly without father bred!
How little you bested,
  Or fill the fixèd mind with all your toys!
Dwell in some idle brain,
  And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
  As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,
Or likest hovering dreams,
  The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But, hail! thou Goddess sage and holy!
Hail, divinest Melancholy!
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starred Ethiop Queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The Sea-Nymphs, and their powers offended.
Yet thou art higher far descended:
Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she; in Saturn's reign
Such mixture was not held a stain.
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades

Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of cypress lawn
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come; but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing;
And add to these retirèd Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
But, first and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheelèd throne,
The Cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustomed oak.

Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, Chauntress, oft the woods among
I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering Moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar;
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removèd place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook;

And of those Dæmons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or underground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet or with element.
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine,
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.
But, O sad Virgin! that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower;
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what Love did seek;
Or call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar King did ride;
And if aught else great Bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not tricked and frounced, as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,

But kerchieft in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or ushered with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute-drops from off the eaves.
And, when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring
To archèd walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heavèd stroke
Was never heard the Nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
There, in close covert, by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honeyed thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep.
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings, in airy stream
Of lively portraiture displayed,
Softly on my eyelids laid.
And as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.
But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,

And love the high embowèd roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell,
Of every star that Heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew;
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

COMUS

THE PERSONS

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, afterwards in the habit of THYRSIS.
COMUS, with his Crew.
THE LADY.
FIRST BROTHER.
SECOND BROTHER.
SABRINA, the Nymph.

The Chief Persons which presented were: —

The Lord Brackley;
Mr. Thomas Egerton, his Brother;
The Lady Alice Egerton.

The first Scene discovers a wild wood.

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT *descends or enters.*

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial Spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call Earth, and, with low-thoughted care,
Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants
Amongst the enthronèd gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the Palace of Eternity.
To such my errand is; and, but for such,

I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.
But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,
Took in, by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove,
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt Isles
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadornèd bosom of the Deep;
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns
And wield their little tridents. But this Isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-haired deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble Peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide
An old and haughty Nation, proud in arms:
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-intrusted sceptre. But their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that, by quick command from sovran Jove,
I was despatched for their defence and guard!
And listen why; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misusèd wine,

After the Tuscan mariners transformed,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell. (Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmèd cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?)
This Nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks,
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a Son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named:
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And, in thick shelter of black shades imbowered,
Excels his mother at her mighty art;
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which as they taste
(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst),
Soon as the potion works, their human count'nance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,
Or ounce or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were.
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore, when any favoured of high Jove
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,

Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do. But first I must put off
These my sky-robes, spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

COMUS *enters, with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of Monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering. They come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold
Now the top of heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of Day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream:
And the slope Sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed;

And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert Fairies and the dapper Elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,
The Wood-Nymphs, decked with daises trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin;
'T is only daylight that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto, to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns! mysterious Dame,
That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air!
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou ridest with Hecat', and befriend
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice Morn on the Indian steep,

From her cabined loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale Sun descry
Our concealed solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

The Measure.

Break off, break off! I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright. Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods! Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains: I shall ere long
Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the Damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course.
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may her business hear.

The LADY *enters.*

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now. Methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,
When, for their teeming flocks and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth
To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
Of such late wassailers; yet, oh! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket-side
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then when the grey-hooded even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts. 'T is likeliest
They had engaged their wandering steps too far;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me. Else, O thievish Night,
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That Nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps

With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveler?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.
O welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemished form of Chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassailed. . . .
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err: there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.
I cannot hallo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I 'll venture; for my new-enlivened spirits
Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

SONG

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy airy shell
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale
Where the love-lorn Nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well:
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet Queen of Parley, daughter of the Sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies!

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.

Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I 'll speak to her,
And she shall be my Queen. — Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the Goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan or Sylvan, by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

Lady. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise
That is addressed to unattending ears.
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my severed company,
Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Comus. What chance, good Lady, hath bereft you thus?

Lady. Dim darkness and this leavy labyrinth.

Comus. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?

Lady. They left me weary on a grassy turf.

Comus. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

Lady. To seek i' the valley some cool friendly spring.

Comus. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady?

Lady. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.

Comus. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit!
Comus. Imports their loss, beside the present need?
Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.
Comus. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?
Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.
Comus. Two such I saw, what time the laboured ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinked hedger at his supper sat.
I saw them under a green mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port was more than human, as they stood.
I took it for a faery vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-strook,
And, as I passed, I worshipped. If those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to heaven
To help you find them.
Lady. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
Comus. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.
Lady. To find out that, good Shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.
Comus. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;

And, if your stray attendance be yet lodged,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatched pallet rouse. If otherwise,
I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.

Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,
With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was named,
And yet is most pretended. In a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportioned strength! Shepherd, lead on. . . .

The Two Brothers.

Eld. Bro. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou, fair Moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite dammed up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long levelled rule of streaming light,
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Sec. Bro. Or, if our eyes
Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks, penned in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,
'T would be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs.
But, oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillowed head, fraught with sad fears.
What if in wild amazement and affright,
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat!

Eld. Bro. Peace, brother: be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils;
For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or, if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would

By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retirèd solitude,
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That, in the various bustle of resort,
Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired.
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.
Sec. Bro. 'T is most true
That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a Hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his grey hairs any violence?
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian Tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit,
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on Opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night or loneliness it recks me not;

I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.
Eld. Bro. I do not, brother,
Infer as if I thought my sister's state
Secure without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I encline to hope rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength,
Which you remember not.
Sec. Bro. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?
Eld. Bro. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own:
'T is Chastity, my brother, Chastity:
She that has that is clad in complete steel,
And, like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharbored heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;
Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity.
Yea, there where very desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblenched majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,

Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of Chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted Queen for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace that dashed brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And in clear dream and solemn vision
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal. But, when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,

But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres,
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself by carnal sensualty
To a degenerate and degraded state.
Sec. Bro. How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.
Eld. Bro. List! list! I hear
Some far-off hallo break the silent air.
Sec. Bro. Methought so too; what should it be?
Eld. Bro. For certain,
Either some one, like us, night-foundered here,
Or else some neighbor woodman, or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
Sec. Bro. Heaven keep my sister! Again, again, and near!
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.
Eld. Bro. I 'll hallo.
If he be friendly, he comes well: if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us!

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *habited like a shepherd.*

That hallo I should know. What are you? speak.
Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else.

Spir. What voice is that? my young Lord? speak again.

Sec. Bro. O brother, 't is my father's Shepherd, sure.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis! whose artful strains have oft delayed
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale.
How camest thou here, good swain? Hath any ram
Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook?

Spir. O my loved master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, oh! my virgin Lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?

Eld. Bro. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without blame
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

Spir. Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.

Eld. Bro. What fears, good Thyrsis? Prithee briefly shew.

Spir. I 'll tell ye. 'T is not vain or fabulous
(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,
Storied of old in high immortal verse
Of *dire* Chimeras and enchanted Isles,

And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.
Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades, a Sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries,
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
Charactered in the face. This have I learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts
That brow this bottom glade; whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorrèd rites to Hecate
In their obscurèd haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits and guileful spells
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill. But ere a close
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,

And filled the air with barbarous dissonance;
At which I ceased, and listened them a while,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtained Sleep.
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death. But, oh! ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honoured Lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear;
And "O poor hapless Nightingale," thought I,
"How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!"
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place
Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew), had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey;
Who gently asked if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbor villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here;
But further know I not.

Sec. Bro. O night and shades,

How are ye joined with hell in triple knot
Against the unarmèd weakness of one virgin,
Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?
Eld. Bro. Yes, and keep it still;
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
Of malice or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm:
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled;
Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness, when at last,
Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed and self-consumed. If this fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on!
Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But, for that damned magician, let him be girt
With all the griesly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to restore his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.
Spir. Alas! good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;

But here thy sword can do thee little stead.
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.
Eld. Bro. Why, prithee, Shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this relation?
Spir. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprisal
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled
In every virtuous plant and healing herb
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray.
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing;
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy,
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out.
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon;
And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.
He called it Hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovran use
'*Gainst* all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,

Or ghastly Furies' apparition.
I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compelled.
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised,
Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off. If you have this about you
(As I will give you when we go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood
And brandished blade rush on him: break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground;
But seize his wand. Though he and his curst crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or, like the sons of Vulcan, vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis, lead on apace; I 'll follow thee;
And some good angel bear a shield before us!

The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness: soft music, tables spread with all dainties. COMUS *appears with his rabble, and the* LADY *set in an enchanted chair; to whom he offers his glass; which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

Comus. Nay, Lady, sit. If I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster,
And you a statue, or as Daphne was,
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

Lady. Fool, do not boast.
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled while Heaven sees good.

Comus. Why are you vexed, Lady? why do you frown?

Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.
And first behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.
Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms,
Scorning the unexempt condition
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.

Lady. 'T will not, false traitor!
'T will not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage and the safe abode
Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!
Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence

With vizored falsehood and base forgery?
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
With lickerish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer. None
But such as are good men can give good things;
And that which is not good is not delicious
To a well-governed and wise appetite.
Comus. O foolishness of men! that lend their ear
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence!
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutched the all-worshipped ore and precious gems,
To store her children with. If all the world
Should, in a pet of temperance, feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,
Not half his riches known, and yet despised;
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,

Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility:
The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes;
The herds would over-multitude their lords;
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamonds
Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the Sun with shameless brows.
List, Lady; be not coy, and be not cozened
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin; must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself.
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languished head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship.
It is for homely features to keep home;
They had their name thence: coarse complexions
And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the Morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advised; you are but young yet.

Lady. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler

Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance. She, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance.
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well-dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumbered with her store;
And then the Giver would be better thanked,
His praise due paid: for swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enow? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of Chastity
Fain would I something say; — yet to what end?
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul, to apprehend
The sublime notion and high mystery
That must be uttered to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginity;
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.

Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced.
Yet, should I try, the uncontrollèd worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence
That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,
And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.
Comus. She fables not. I feel that I do fear
Her words set off by some superior power;
And, though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly. — Come, no more!
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation.
I must not suffer this; yet 't is but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood.
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste . . .

The BROTHERS *rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground: his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The* ATTENDANT SPIRIT *comes in.*

Spir. What! have you let the false Enchanter scape?
O ye mistook; ye should have snatched his wand,
And bound him fast. Without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,

We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed and motionless.
Yet stay: be not disturbed; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be used,
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that ere piped on plains.
There is a gentle Nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream:
Sabrina is her name: a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enragèd stepdame, Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood
That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,
Held up their pearlèd wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectared lavers strewed with asphodel,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made Goddess of the river. Still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vialed liquors heals:
For which the shepherds, at their festivals,

Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream,
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invoked in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need. This will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG

Sabrina fair,
  Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
  In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
  Listen for dear honour's sake,
  Goddess of the silver lake,
    Listen and save!

Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus,
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace;
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wizard's hook;
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell;
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands;
By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,

And the songs of Sirens sweet;
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance;
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answered have.
Listen and save!

SABRINA *rises, attended by Water-nymphs, and sings.*

By the rushy-fringèd bank,
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays:
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread.
Gentle swain, at thy request
I am here!

Spir. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmèd band
Of true virgin here distressed
Through the force and through the wile
Of unblessed enchanter vile.

Sabr. Shepherd, 't is my office best
To help insnarèd chastity.
Brightest Lady, look on me.
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops that from my fountain pure
I have kept of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next this marble venomed seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.
Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste ere morning hour
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

SABRINA *descends, and the* LADY *rises out of her seat.*

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmèd waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drouth or singèd air
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crowned
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

Come, Lady; while heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound
Till we come to holier ground.
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide;
And not many furlongs thence
Is your father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wished presence, and beside
All the swains that there abide
With jigs and rural dance resort.
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer.
Come, let us haste; the stars grow high,
But Night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The scene changes, presenting Ludlow Town, and the President's Castle: then come in country dancers; after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *with the two* BROTHERS *and the* LADY.

SONG

Spir. Back, Shepherds, back! Enough your play
Till next sun-shine holiday.
Here be, without duck or nod,
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise

With the mincing Dryades
On the lawns and on the leas.

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble Lord and Lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight.
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own.
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual folly and intemperance.

The dances ended, the SPIRIT *epilogizes.*

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky.
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the Golden Tree.
Along the crispèd shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours
Thither all their bounties bring.
There eternal summer dwells,
And west winds with musky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow

Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen;
But far above in spangled sheen
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,
After her wandring labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.
But now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend,
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals, that would follow me,
Love virtue, she alone is free;
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime:
Or, if virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

LYCIDAS

In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637; and, by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height.

YET once more, O ye Laurels, and once more,
Ye Myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
Compels me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.
Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse:
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour *my* destined urn,
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!
For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;

Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute;
Tempered to the oaten flute
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long;
And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.
But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes, mourn.
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.
Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old Bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,

Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.
Ay me! I fondly dream
"Had ye been there," . . . for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal nature did lament,
When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?
Alas! what boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, Shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorrèd shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears:
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."
O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood,

Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the Herald of the Sea,
That came in Neptune's plea.
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
And questioned every gust of rugged wings
That blows from off each beakèd promontory.
They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed:
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.
Next, Camus, reverend Sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.
"Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"
Last came, and last did go,
The Pilot of the Galilean Lake;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake: —
"How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enough of such as, for their bellies' sake,
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!
Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,

And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim Wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said.
But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."
Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,

And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so, to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled;
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great Vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold,
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth:
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.
  Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above,

In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the Shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth Swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still Morn went out with sandals grey:
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay.
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

SONNETS

ON HIS BEING ARRIVED TO THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arrived so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

ON THE LORD GENERAL FAIRFAX AT THE SIEGE OF COLCHESTER

Fairfax, whose name in arms through Europe rings,
Filling each mouth with envy or with praise,
And all her jealous monarchs with amaze,
And rumours loud that daunt remotest kings,
Thy firm unshaken virtue ever brings
Victory home, though new rebellions raise
Their Hydra heads, and the false North displays
Her broken league to imp their serpent wings.

O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand
(For what can war but endless war still breed?)
Till truth and right from violence be freed,
And public faith cleared from the shameful brand
Of public fraud. In vain doth Valour bleed,
While Avarice and Rapine share the land.

TO THE LORD GENERAL CROMWELL, ON THE PROPOSALS OF CERTAIN MINISTERS AT THE COMMITTEE FOR PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL

Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud
Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast ploughed,
And on the neck of crownèd Fortune proud
Hast reared God's trophies, and his work pursued,
While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots imbrued,
And Dunbar field, resounds thy praises loud,
And Worcester's laureate wreath: yet much remains
To conquer still; Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than War: new foes arise,
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains.
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw.

TO SIR HENRY VANE THE YOUNGER

Vane, young in years, but in sage counsel old,
Than whom a better senator ne'er held

The helm of Rome, when gowns, not arms, repelled
The fierce Epirot and the African bold,
Whether to settle peace, or to unfold
The drift of hollow states hard to be spelled;
Then to advise how war may best, upheld,
Move by her two main nerves, iron and gold,
In all her equipage; besides, to know
Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,
What severs each, thou hast learned, which few have done.
The bounds of either sword to thee we owe:
Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans
In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son.

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEMONT

AVENGE, O Lord, thy slaughtered Saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who, having learnt thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

ON HIS BLINDNESS

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

THE METER OF THE POEMS

THE unit of English versification is the metrical foot, made up of either two or three syllables, one at least of which must be accented. Two types of foot are regularly used in Milton's *Minor Poems:* the iambic, consisting of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one, as in the word *until;* and the trochaic, having two syllables in reverse order, as in the word *wonder.* A certain number of feet compose a line: two feet make a dimeter; three feet a trimeter; four feet a tetrameter; five feet a pentameter; and six feet a hexameter. Lines are named by describing the kind and number of feet that compose them: thus, *L'Allegro,* 11, —

But cóme,|thou Gód|dess fáir|and frée —

is iambic tetrameter, with four iambic feet; and *Lycidas,* 2, —

Ye Mýr|tles brówn,|with í|vy né|ver sére, —

is, of course, iambic pentameter.

Lines may be rhymed with each other in countless ways. Unrhymed iambic pentameter, found throughout much of *Comus,* is called blank verse. Lines may be rhymed in pairs, or couplets, as in *L'Allegro,* 87–88. —

And thén|in háste|her bówer|she léaves,
With Thés|ty lís|to bínd|the shéaves, —

which is iambic tetrameter, or octosyllabic, couplet, or in *Comus,* 497–98, —

How camést|thou hére,|good swáin ?|Hath á|ny ram
Slipped fróm|the fóld,|or yóung|kid lóst|his dám, —

which is iambic pentameter, or heroic, couplet. Rhymes may also occur in stanza form, as in the last eight lines of

Lycidas, or irregularly, as in the remainder of the same poem. Couplets may be formed of two lines of different types, as in *L'Allegro*, 91–92, —

Sometimes|with se|cure de|light
The up|land ham|lets will|in vite, —

where the first line has a trochaic movement, and the second an iambic one. There are frequent lines with irregularities, as in *L'Allegro*, 41, —

And at|my win|dow bid|good-mor|row, —

which is iambic tetrameter, with an extra syllable. Occasionally the versification affords a key to Milton's pronunciation, as in *Comus*, 4, —

In re|gions mild|of calm|and se|rene air, —

where the accent of *serene* is determined by the iambic meter.

L'Allegro and *Il Penseroso* open with ten iambic lines, of alternate trimeter and pentameter structure, rhyming ABBACDDEEC. The body of each poem is in tetrameter couplets, the lines being either iambic or trochaic. Milton's wonderful power of versification depends largely on his skillful management of the metrical changes from one type of foot to another.

Comus is written mainly in blank verse, with one short passage in iambic pentameter couplet (495–512), some parts in the tetrameter couplet of *L'Allegro*, and three songs. one by the Lady, one by the Attendant Spirit, and one by Sabrina, in irregularly rhymed verse of lines of varying length. The student can have no better exercise in the analysis of versification than a study of the complicated structure of the Lady's song, "Sweet Echo" (230–43), with its lines varying from dimeter to hexameter and its peculiar arrangement of rhymes.

Lycidas is made up chiefly of iambic pentameter lines, sprinkled with trimeter, rhyming irregularly, while ten

seem not to rhyme at all. It is divided into ten stanzas or metrical paragraphs of varying length and rhyme scheme, concluding with a perfect specimen of *ottava rima*, or octave stanza, rhyming ABABABCC. Professor Trent says of the versification of this poem: "The rhythm is varied, and flows now in leaping waves, now in long rolling billows that carry all before them, like the surging periods of *Paradise Lost*. There is probably no short poem in the language the rhythm of which has been more deservedly praised, or more despaired of by other poets."

NOTES FOR CAREFUL STUDY

L'Allegro and Il Penseroso

These two companion poems, written probably during the early months of Milton's residence at Horton, are approximately similar in meter and general construction, but are deliberately contrasted in title and substance. They represent, however, not so much two distinct and unsympathetic types of character, as two separate moods of a single person: a man of scholarly tastes and artistic temperament, such as the young Milton must have been. Thus, although the poems are consistently antithetical, they are complementary rather than antagonistic in their respective attitudes towards life. *L'Allegro* ("The Cheerful Man") describes the pleasures of a quiet, somewhat bookish gentleman in a buoyant and care-free state of mind; *Il Penseroso* ("The Meditative Man") follows the recreations of the same person when he is in a mood more sedate and serious. They are really idylls, each comprising a series of little pictures unified by the prevailing sentiment behind them. In each poem, moreover, the selection of details is so carefully done that every element contributes, either directly or by suggestion, to illustrate the mood indicated by the title.

The true contrast is, then, one of underlying spirit or feeling; but this is brought out strongly also by a studied parallelism of structure, many passages balancing each other almost part for

part. Thus, *L'Allegro* begins at dawn and ends at midnight, while *Il Penseroso*, opening at evening, closes at noon of the next day; the lark in the one work corresponds to the nightingale in the other; Mirth is "buxom, blithe, and debonair," and Melancholy is "sober, steadfast, and demure." A careful study of these ingenious features of Milton's method will leave the student with a high appreciation of the poems as masterpieces of constructive art.

Milton at this period was still under thirty, and as yet unprejudiced against the stage and other mundane pleasures; accordingly the poems show few traces of Puritanism, and are full of a Renaissance delight in living. He was, moreover, fresh from the university and steeped in classical learning; this accounts largely for the extraordinary allusiveness of single lines, crammed as they are with literary reminiscences and with references to Greek and Roman myths. His training as a musician gave him a sense of the niceties of rhythm, and led him to experiments in the subtler effects of intonation, alliteration, and assonance. Finally he was already a cultivated poet, with a fine imagination, a fastidious discrimination, and an unerring feeling for taste and proportion. In felicitous phrasing, in flexibility and variety of versification, and in power of suggestive description these twin poems have a classical perfection which makes them comparable with a work like Gray's famous *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*.

L'Allegro (page 12)

1–10. This invocation accords with a common device of the classical poets. Here, however, Milton uses it, not to call at once upon the favoring deity, but to warn off the opposing spirit of Melancholy. The first ten lines of *Il Penseroso* should be read at this point, in order that the parallelism in structure and manner may be noted. The metrical scheme of this introduction, with its alternate pentameter and trimeter lines, is intentionally irregular and rough as compared with the smooth tetrameter couplets of the remainder of the poem. The cumulative effect of the harsh descriptive epithets is to produce at once a repugnant impression of that Melancholy, the presence of which is incompatible with the Cheerful Man's mood.

1. The **loathèd Melancholy** of this line is obviously con-

ceived as different from the **divinest Melancholy** of *Il Penseroso*, 12. Here, in strict adherence to its derivation from two Greek words meaning "black bile," it seems to connote gloom or dejection.

2. **Cerberus**: the three-headed dog that guarded the gates of Hades. There is no myth to justify the parentage of Melancholy here presented. According to the Greeks, Erebus was the spouse of Night.

3. **Stygian**: connected with the river Styx, "the flood of deadly hate" (*Paradise Lost*, II, 577) which flowed through the infernal regions.

5. **Uncouth**: originally "unknown," from its Anglo-Saxon derivation. Here it means rather strange or unfamiliar. What is its present meaning?

6. This line illustrates one characteristic feature of Milton's poetic style: the power of rich suggestion which he attains by the use of figurative and allusive epithets. The student should try to reproduce in his own mind the picture imagined by the author.

7. **Night-raven**: the raven is not a night bird, but is regularly associated with ill omens. See *Macbeth*, I, v, 39–41.

8. **Low-browed**: over-hanging.

10. **Cimmerian desert**: the Cimmerians, according to the *Odyssey*, X, 14, dwelt in perpetual darkness, "wrapt in a fog and cloud."

11. At this point the body of the poem begins, with an invocation to Mirth, the auspicious goddess. Notice the effect gained by the word **but**.

12. **Yclep'd**: called. The word is a survival of the old past participle of the Anglo-Saxon *clepen*, the *y* being a modification of the prefix *ge* still used in the past participle of most German verbs. **Euphrosyne** (Mirth) was one of the the three Graces her sisters (see line 15) being **Aglaia** (Brightness) and **Thalia** (Bloom).

14. Milton found this parentage in a note by Servius on Virgil's **Æneid**, I, 720. The Greek myth made Zeus and Eurynome the parents of the Graces.

16. **Venus**, the goddess of love and beauty, and **Bacchus**, the god of wine and revelry, would be fitting parents for the Graces.

17. **As some sager sing**: as some wiser poets sing. This is a subtle reference to the fact that Milton himself has invented the genealogy which follows.

19. **Zephyr** was the god of the west wind, and **Aurora** was the lovely goddess of the dawn.

24. **Buxom**: originally *yielding*, from the Anglo-Saxon *bugan*, to bow; later, *jolly* or *frolicsome*, its meaning here. **Debonair**: from the French *de bonne air*, of a gay disposition.

27. The distinctions in this line are finely drawn. **Quips**: sharp sayings. **Cranks**: "conceits," or odd turns of speech.

28. **Becks**: beckonings.

29. **Hebe**: daughter of Jupiter and Juno. She was the goddess of youth and cupbearer to the gods on Olympus.

31. **Derides**: the subject of this verb is the noun **Sport**.

33. **Trip it**: compare our modern expressions "lord it" and "go it."

34. **On the light fantastic toe**: with dances improvised to suit the fancy.

36. **Mountain Nymph**: a love of liberty is characteristic of people dwelling in mountainous regions, like Switzerland or the Scotch Highlands. At the right hand is, of course, the place of honor.

40. **Unreprovèd**: blameless or innocent.

41. With this line begins the chronology of the "ideal day," not, however, belonging entirely to one season. It starts quite naturally with the song of the lark before dawn. The **unreprovèd pleasures** follow in appositive phrases: **to hear** (41), **to come** (45), **oft listening** (53) **sometime walking** (57), etc.

45. **In spite of sorrow**: in a feeling of spite towards sorrow.

46. This somewhat obscure passage has given rise to at least three interpretations. Some editors maintain that the lark comes to the window; others that the man comes to the window from without the house; and still others that L'Allegro, awakened by the lark's song, goes to his window to greet the day. This last solution is the most plausible.

50. The figure refers to the scattering of the "thin" rear-guard of a retreating army.

52. Scan this line. For what effect is Milton striving through *this change in meter*?

55. **Hoar hill**: the hill is either covered with frost or shrouded in mist.

56. **High wood**: probably best taken as meaning a forest of tall trees cleared of underbrush.

57. **Not unseen**: these words suggest the sociable nature of L' Allegro. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 65.

59. **Right against**: directly opposite. He is walking eastward towards the rising sun.

60. **State**: his stately progress through the sky.

62. **Dight**: arrayed. The clouds, the attendants of the sun, are dressed in gorgeously colored liveries or costumes.

67. **Tells his tale**: counts the number of his flock. Cf. our modern *tally*, *to tell one's beads*, etc.

69. **Straight**: straightway.

70. **Landskip**: an old form of landscape. Parse the word **round**.

71. **Lawns**: open fields. **Fallows**: sections of ploughed land left unsown.

74. Explain the significance of the word **labouring** as applied to the clouds.

75. **Pied**: of different colors.

77. **Towers and battlements**: a reference possibly to Windsor Castle, only four miles from Horton and plainly visible from that place.

80. **Cynosure**: the object towards which all eyes are directed. The word, literally "dog's tail" through its derivation from the Greek, was applied by the ancients to that portion of the Little Bear constellation, resembling a dog, which contains the pole star. By this star the Tyrian sailors were accustomed to steer their ships; hence it came to mean any object on which people fix their eyes. Cf. *Comus*, 342.

83. **Corydon, Thyrsis, Phillis** (86), and **Thestylis** (88) are conventional names of shepherds and shepherdesses drawn from Greek pastoral poetry.

87. **Bower**: here not *bed-chamber*, as in the old ballads, but *cottage*.

89. Milton's mention of an earlier season is clear evidence that he did not mean to adhere strictly to the description of a single day in one specific time of the year.

91. **Secure**: free from care, by derivation from the Latin *securus*.

92. **Upland hamlets**: secluded villages, contrasted with the towered cities of line 117.

94. **Rebecks**: a rebeck was a mediæval musical instrument of two or three strings, shaped and played like a violin.

102. **Fairy Mab**: the mischievous Queen of Fairies, and traditionally the patron and tormentor of servants. See Mercutio's description of her in *Romeo and Juliet*, I, iv, 53–95. **Junkets**: cheese cakes or sweetmeats in general. Notice Milton's pronunciation of **eat**, the preterit of **eat**, to rhyme with **feat**.

103–05. Different members of the gathering, **she** and **he**, tell of their experiences with fairies.

104. **Friar's lantern**: the will-o'-the-wisp, or *ignis fatuus*.

105. **Drudging Goblin**: Robin Goodfellow, the Puck of Shakespeare's *Midsummer's Night's Dream*. It is part of fairy lore that he sometimes comes at night to assist the peasant in his threshing, and should therefore be rewarded with a bowl of cream **duly set** to refresh him after his labors.

110. **Lubber**: clownish.

111. **Chimney's length**: along the fireplace.

113. **Crop-full**: with a full stomach.

114. At the first crowing of the cock all ghosts and spirits were supposed to vanish, their power having ended with the coming of day. See *Hamlet*, I, i, 147–56. **Matin**: a morning song.

117. Two theories exist as to the significance of the remainder of the poem. Either the Cheerful Man returns to his home to spend the evening in reading romances, masques, and comedies; or the amusements described may be those in which such a man would be likely to be interested for his recreation. Probably the first interpretation is the less open to objection.

120. **Weeds**: garments. This almost obsolete meaning of the word is preserved in our modern phrase "widow's weeds." **Triumphs**: grand shows or celebrations.

123. **Both**: both wit and arms contend for the prize.

125. **Hymen**: the god of marriage.

128. **Mask**: masques and their characteristics are treated in the Introduction to *Comus*, page 32.

132. **Jonson's learnèd sock**: Ben Jonson (1573–1637), who had been Shakespeare's chief contemporary rival as a dramatist, was still alive at this date, although his best work had been done. Jonson was a scholarly writer, who based his plays largely

on classical models and affected to scorn the public of his own time. His best comedies are *Volpone* (1605), *The Silent Woman* (1609), and *The Alchemist* (1610).

Sock is from the Latin *soccus*, the low-heeled slipper worn by Greek and Roman comic actors. It is here used as symbolic of comedy.

133–34. "This characterization applies better to some of Shakespeare's scattered songs than to his romantic plays or his comedies as a whole" (Moody). Milton is here contrasting Shakespeare's spontaneity with Jonson's learning, which was almost equal to Milton's own.

135. **Eating cares**: a classical expression borrowed from the Latin poet Horace, who had spoken of *curas edaces* (*Odes*, II, ii, 18).

136. There were three kinds of Greek music: the Doric, the Phrygian, and the **Lydian**, the last being the sweetest and tenderest.

138. **Meeting soul**: the soul that hears them and is affected by them. Notice the old pronunciation of the word **pierce** to rhyme with **verse**.

139. **Bout**: turn.

141. **Wanton heed and giddy cunning**: this is the figure of speech called "oxymoron," in which an epithet of a contrary meaning is added to a word. "The adjectives describe the appearance, the nouns the reality."

145. Orpheus, the most famous of mythical musicians, persuaded Pluto, the god of the lower world, to allow him to bring back his dead wife from Hades, on condition that Orpheus should not turn to look at her until she had reached the upper air. Before the stipulated time, however, he glanced back, and she disappeared in a cloud. Thus his Eurydice, once **half-regained**, was lost forever. Milton was fond of this story, and referred to it in *Il Penseroso*, 105–08, and in *Lycidas*, 58–63.

Il Penseroso (page 17)

Except for the fact that it is somewhat longer, this poem is framed almost exactly on the model of *L' Allegro*. It is probable that Milton was rather more in sympathy with his subject here than in its companion work.

1–10. Notice in these lines, which should be compared with the introductory passage of *L' Allegro*, what a different effect

Milton secures with very little change in method. The driving off of the vain deluding Joys parallels, even to little tricks of phraseology, the Hence, loathèd Melancholy of the other poem.

3. **Bested**: avail.

4. **Fixèd**: resolute or firmly established.

6. **Fond**: foolish. Cf. "fond and foolish mind" in the old English ballads.

10. The figure in this line needs careful examination. Morpheus, the god of sleep, is pictured as having a retinue of followers (dreams) dependent on his bounty.

12. **Melancholy**: here not gloom, as in *L' Allegro*, 1, but rather thoughtfulness or "pensive contemplation."

14. **To hit the sense**: to be suited to human sight.

18. **Memnon**: the son of Tithonus and Aurora. He was King of the Ethiopians and assisted King Priam of Troy during the Trojan War, being finally slain by Achilles. Although he was dark-skinned, he was reputed to be marvelously handsome. Nothing is known of any sister of his; but she may be imagined as being no less beautiful than her brother.

19. **That starred Ethiop Queen**: Cassiopea, mother of Andromeda, boasted that her beauty was above that of the Nereids. The **Sea-Nymphs** avenged themselves by exposing Andromeda to a monster, but the girl was rescued by Perseus, who became her husband. Both Cassiopea and Andromeda were afterwards placed among the constellations; i.e., **starred**.

23–24. This genealogy was invented by Milton. **Vesta** was the goddess of the hearth and of chastity, celebrated by the Roman vestal virgins. She was the daughter of **Saturn**, who may typify solitude. Thus Melancholy may be considered as the daughter of chastity and solitude, as compared with Mirth, the child of love and wine.

29. **Woody Ida**: not the mountain near the city of Troy, but Mount Ida in Crete, where the infant Jove was nurtured. See *Paradise Lost*, I, 515.

30. Jove eventually rebelled against his father, Saturn, and seized for himself the throne of the gods.

33. **Darkest grain**: deep blue or purple. These dyes were obtained from the dried cochineal bug, which looks much like a grain. Colors made in this way were said to be grained.

35. **Stole**: veil or hood. **Cypress lawn**: a thin crape cloth, supposed first to have come from the island of Cyprus.

36. **Decent**: comely or beautiful.

37. **State**: dignity.

39. **Commercing**: communing.

41. **Still**: here used as an adjective.

42. **Forget thyself to marble**: here again it is worth the student's while to visualize the picture conceived by the poet. The figure is taken from sculpture.

43. **Sad**: grave. **Leaden**: heavy.

46. **Spare Fast**: this is the doctrine of "plain living and high thinking." Milton believed in temperance in diet.

47. The **Muses**, the nine daughters of Jove and Mnemosyne (Memory), were the patrons of art, literature, and science.

52–54. The reference here to the **fiery-wheelèd throne** is drawn from the famous vision in *Ezekiel*, x. Milton ventures to name one of the cherubim described by the prophet.

55. This puzzling line may be paraphrased, "And, whispering **hist**!, bring along the mute silence."

56. **Philomel**: the nightingale. Philomela, the daughter of Pandion, was, because of her part in the murder of her nephew, Itylus, changed by the gods into a nightingale, in which form she constantly bewails her fate in sweet song. The student should read Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* and Matthew Arnold's *Philomela*.

57. **Plight**: strain.

59. **Cynthia**: Diana, the goddess of the moon. Ceres, not Diana, however, was drawn by dragons.

60. **Accustomed oak**: the tree where the bird was accustomed to sing.

64. **Even-song**: contrasted with the matin of the cock in *L' Allegro*. 114. The nightingale's song introduces the enumeration of the evening pleasures of the Meditative Man.

65. **Unseen**: the Thoughtful Man prefers to walk by himself, just as the Cheerful Man had wished for society. See *L' Allegro* 57.

68. **Highest noon**: the highest point of her course for the night.

72. **Stooping**: the picture produced by the use of this word should be visualized.

74. **Curfew**: from the French *couvre-feu*, to cover fire. The bell rang about nine o'clock in the evening, warning householders to cover over or extinguish their fires. How is the word used to-day?

76. How are the meter and the sound of the words in this line made to reproduce the slow swinging of the bell?

78. **Still removèd**: quiet and secluded. The Cheerful Man enjoyed the merry group of peasants gathered around a bright hearth; the Meditative Man muses alone over a smouldering fire in a shadowy room.

83. **Bellman's drowsy charm**: the bellman, or night watchman, was accustomed to go on his rounds, ringing a bell and crying the hour. Sometimes he droned a prayer or charm for the security of householders.

84. **Nightly**: in the night time.

85. The Meditative Man burns "midnight oil" in reading over philosophy, tragedy, lyric poetry, and romances.

87. **Outwatch the Bear**: the constellation of the Bear does not set in English latitudes; therefore the meaning is that the Meditative Man sits up all night.

88. **Thrice-great Hermes**: Hermes Trismegistus (not to be confused with the god Hermes or Mercury) was the fabled Egyptian philosopher and magician, Thoth, the reputed author of certain scientific books really written by the Alexandrian philosophers of the fourth century.

88–89. **Unsphere the spirit of Plato**: to draw down the spirit of Plato, the great Greek philosopher, from the sphere in which it is now dwelling; in other words, to study carefully his doctrine, particularly as regards immortality, as expressed in his famous treatise, the *Phœdo*.

93. **Dæmons**: spirits.

94–95. The four universal elements of the ancients were earth, air, fire, and water. The theory expressed here is that the spirits of each element have a sympathetic connection or true consent with a particular planet.

97. **Gorgeous Tragedy**: the Meditative Man, instead of reading comedies by his contemporaries (*L' Allegro*, 131–34), chooses the Greek tragedies of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

98. **Sceptred pall**: wearing a kingly robe and carrying the regal scepter.

99–100. The subjects of the great Greek tragedies were taken largely from the stories named here: tales of Œdipus, King of Thebes; of Agamemnon, grandson of Pelops; and of the Trojan War. Milton is thinking of such plays as *The Seven Against Thebes*, by Æschylus; the *Œdipus Tyrannus* and the *Antigone*, by Sophocles; and the *Electra* and the *Iphigenia*, by Euripides.

101. The words **though rare**, in parentheses, seem to indicate that Milton saw little in the tragedy of his own time to compare with the work of the Greeks. Evidently he did not appreciate fully the worth of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*.

102. **Buskined stage**: a reference to the high-heeled shoe, or buskin, worn by the Greek and Roman actors in tragedy. It is contrasted with the **sock** worn by comic actors (see *L' Allegro*, 132).

104. **Musæus**: a mythical bard of Thrace, contemporary with Orpheus.

105–08. For the story of Orpheus, see *L' Allegro*, 145–50, and note.

107. **Iron tears**: a transferred epithet. The line means "drew tears down the cheek of iron-hearted Pluto."

108. **Hell**: a personified title for Pluto, the god of the lower world.

109–15. **Him that left half-told**: Geoffrey Chaucer (1340 ?–1400) left unfinished his *Squire's Tale*, one of the *Canterbury Tales*. **Cambuscan**, King of Tartary, had two sons, **Camball** and **Algarsife**, and one daughter, **Canace**. The **virtuous ring** (which gave the wearer power to understand the language of birds and the properties of plants), the **glass** (a kind of magic mirror), and **the wondrous horse of brass** (which had the power of flight), were, according to the tale, sent by the King of India to the Tartar King and his daughter. No one knows whose wife **Canace** became. **That**, in line 113, refers to Canace.

116. **Great Bards**: probably first of all Edmund Spenser (1552–99), the author of the *Faerie Queene*. Milton may also refer to Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso, the Italian writers of romantic epics of an allegorical character, **where more is meant than meets the ear.**

121. Notice that this line has ten syllables.

122. **Civil-suited**: in plain civilian dress. In *L' Allegro* the dawn was decked out in showy fashion.

123. **Tricked**: adorned. **Frounced**: with curled hair.

124. **Attic boy**: Cephalus, the husband of Procris. He was a hunter who was beloved by Aurora, goddess of the dawn.

125. **Kerchieft**: wrapped in a head-covering.

130. **Minute-drops**: drops falling a minute apart.

134. **Brown**: dark. **Sylvan**: Sylvanus, a Roman forest divinity, sometimes identified with Pan. Cf. the Latin *silva*, a wood.

135. **Monumental oak**: referring probably to the oak as a very monument among trees. It is a common poetical epithet.

141. **Garish**: glaring or gaudy. Cf. the line in the hymn *Lead, kindly Light:* "I loved the garish day."

145. **Concert**: harmony.

147–50. This passage has proved puzzling to many editors. It may be paraphrased: "Let some strange mysterious dream, laid softly on my eyelids, move to and fro in accordance with the motion of the wings of sleep."

153. **To mortals good**: good to mortals.

155. **Due feet**: feet in duty bound. Cf. *Comus*, 12.

156. **Cloister's pale**: the inclosure of the cloister of a church or cathedral.

157. **High embowèd roof**: the lofty arched roof of a Gothic cathedral.

158. **Massy proof**: heavy, and therefore able to support the great mass of the roof.

159. **Storied windows richly dight**: windows of stained glass, representing in rich colors the various Biblical stories.

162. **Quire**: this word is now spelled *choir*.

169. **Hairy gown**: the coarse garment of monks and hermits.

170. **Spell**: interpret.

173. **Old experience**: prolonged experience.

175–76. Compare this last couplet with the concluding lines of *L' Allegro*.

Comus (page 23)

The fact that Milton himself gave *Comus* no other title than *A Masque presented at Ludlow Castle* naturally leads us to consider briefly the origin and characteristics of the masque as a

form of art. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England it was not uncommon at royal celebrations for courtiers, disguised or "masked" as various personages of history or mythology, to represent a "mumming," usually in the shape of a dumb show or pantomime. The word "masque" applied to a festivity of this sort was first used in 1512 by Edward Hall in describing a spectacle "after the maner of Italie, called a masque." It is probable that during the reign of Henry VIII the Italian pageant, popular in Florence under Lorenzo de Medici, was brought to England and combined with the native "mask"; and out of these crude origins there was gradually evolved a coherent and well-defined type of amusement.

The distinguishing feature of the masque seems at first to have been the dance, to which dialogue and singing were but subsidiary. In its perfected form, however, it was essentially a spectacle, elaborately and beautifully staged, diversified with singing, music, and dancing, but having as a base an element of drama; that is, some slight action and a limited amount of dialogue. Since, as has been estimated, the average cost of production was about £6000, it was necessarily an aristocratic amusement. It was rarely given before a public audience, but was privately maintained and presented, either at court or at some wealthy nobleman's castle, the lords and ladies assuming the principal parts. It was thus designed primarily for entertainment at some special occasion, such as a birthday, a royal visit, or a marriage. The plot had frequently an allegorical significance, with compliments, direct or implied, for the king, queen, and greater nobles. The characters were often drawn from mythology or fairyland, and the scenery was frequently of a pastoral kind. Sometimes, especially in Jonson's masques, a grotesque anti-masque was introduced to afford a contrast with the more serious portions of the production. This anti-masque, consisting ordinarily of dancing or revelry, was usually performed by professionals. As a matter of course the costumes were exceedingly sumptuous, like those in a modern fancy-dress ball. Indeed, no expense was spared in making the masque worthy of its audience, and towards its presentation the finest craftsmen in many fields gave their best: such men, for instance, as Daniel, Beaumont, Ben Jonson, and Milton in poetry; Ferrabosco and Lawes in music; and Inigo Jones in architecture and

decoration. In the complete production of a fine masque, music, singing, dancing, painting, and poetry all joined to charm and captivate the senses.

Under the somewhat parsimonious Queen Elizabeth the Masque was popular but seldom gorgeous; but with the accession in 1603 of the more liberal James I, the givers began to rival each other in lavish expenditure. In the hands of Ben Jonson (who composed at least twenty-two masques), Ferrabosco, and Inigo Jones, the masque attained extraordinary vogue. After 1625, however, under the attacks of Puritanism and the accompanying decline of the drama, it began to lose its popularity. Even as late as 1634, nevertheless, when Prynne's *Histriomastix*, a bigoted Puritan arraignment of the stage, was published, two remarkable masques were presented: Carew's *Cœlum Britannicum* and Shirley's *Triumph of Peace*, the latter costing over $100,000 in our money. After this date few masques are recorded, and *Comus* was thus almost the last, as it is, from a poetical standpoint, the greatest, work of its type. By the time of the outbreak of the Civil War between king and Parliament the short but splendid day of the masque had ended.

Even before *Comus*, Milton had already, in the *Arcades* (1633), written a fragment of a masque in honor of the Dowager Countess of Derby. His unquestioned success in the few passages which he composed for this occasion probably led his friend, Henry Lawes, the musician, to invite him to prepare the poetry for a more elaborate production to be given in 1634. Sir John Egerton, first Earl of Bridgewater and the son-in-law of the Countess of Derby, had been appointed in June, 1631, to be President of the Council of Wales, and was to be installed in office at his own Ludlow Castle on the eastern border of Wales. For this ceremony the masque of *Comus* was arranged, Lawes providing the music and Milton the *libretto*, and it was produced on Michaelmas Night, September 29, 1634. The chief parts were played by gentlemen and ladies: Lawes himself was the Attendant Spirit; Lady Alice Egerton, the daughter of the Earl, represented the Lady; and her brothers, Viscount Brackley and Mr. Thomas Egerton, acted the First and Second Brothers. There is no evidence to show that Milton was present at the festivities.

In 1637 an edition of *Comus* was issued by Lawes without

Milton's name attached, although his consent had been obtained. It was later printed as Milton's work in the volume of his poems issued in 1645.

In studying *Comus* it is essential to remember that we are reading what corresponds to an opera *libretto*, and that, in order to appreciate the entire performance, it is necessary to take into account the accessory features of the masque. It is true, however, that Milton in *Comus* gave to the poetry relatively much more importance than other masque writers had been in the habit of doing. Ben Jonson had quarreled furiously with Inigo Jones because the latter had insisted on subordinating the literary part of the spectacle. In *Comus*, Milton assumes that the poetry is the element of most interest, and accordingly he employs as a basic measure the dignified blank verse commonly used in the serious drama. From one point of view this *libretto* of *Comus* is not unlike a pastoral play.

The dramatic action, however, is really slight, and the characters are not carefully developed. The literary value lies mainly in the long speeches, such as those given by Comus, the Brothers, and the Lady, and in the exquisite songs. The work is obviously didactic, aiming at the expression of a definite moral ideal. Jonson had endeavored to convey a lesson in his masques, to make them "carry a mixture of profit with them no less than delight." Milton, in deliberately founding his theme on a problem in ethics, goes even farther. In more than one sense *Comus* shows Milton in a transition stage, still clinging to the forms of the Cavalier court, but adapting them for moral instruction. It is not difficult to imagine the poet of *L'Allegro* verging perceptibly towards the bard of *Paradise Lost*.

2. **Mansion**: abiding place.

7. **Pestered**: here used in its root meaning of *encumbered*, like a horse hobbled in pasture. **Pinfold**: an inclosure or pound for stray cattle.

10. **This mortal change**: probably the change from life to death.

11. **Sainted seats.** Notice how Milton mingles Christian doctrine with Greek and Roman mythology.

12. **Due steps**: steps that fulfill their duty. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 155.

16. **Ambrosial weeds**: celestial garments. Ambrosia was the food of the gods.

17. **This sin-worn mould**: the earth.

20. **High and nether Jove**: Jupiter and Pluto. According to Homer the universe was divided after the fall of Saturn, Neptune being assigned the sea and its islands, Pluto the lower regions, and Jupiter the heavens.

23. **Unadornèd**: otherwise unadorned.

24. **To grace**: to dignify or honor.

25. **Several**: separate.

27. **This Isle**: Great Britain.

29. **Quarters**: divides among. **Blue-haired deities**: probably a reference to the tributary gods, the Nereids, blue-haired because of their association with the sea.

30. **This tract that fronts the falling sun**: Wales. With this line begins a real historical statement of the events leading to the presentation of the masque.

31. **A noble Peer**: the Earl of Bridgewater.

35. **State**: installation.

37. **Perplexed**: entangled.

38. **Nodding horror.** The picture suggested by this line is worth some study.

48. **After the Tuscan mariners transformed**: after the transformation of the Tuscan mariners. Some Tuscan pirates attempted to sell Bacchus into slavery, but he escaped by changing the masts and oars of the ship into serpents and the sailors themselves into dolphins.

49. **Tyrrhene shore**: the western coast of Italy, facing Sardinia. **Listed**: pleased.

50. **Circe.** The story of the visit of Odysseus to this enchantress may be read in the *Odyssey*, x, in any good translation. Her magic potions changed men into swine. Her residence was Ææa, an island west of Italy.

56. This genealogy is entirely Milton's invention. The word Comus is taken from a Greek word meaning a "revel" or "carousal."

59. **Ripe and frolic of his full-grown age**: mature, and rejoicing in his strength.

60. **Celtic and Iberian fields**: France and Spain. Comus passed through these countries on his way to Wales.

65. **Orient**: clear or bright.

66. **Drouth of Phœbus**: thirst caused by the excessive heat of the sun.

67. Fond: foolish, as in *Il Penseroso*, 6.

68–77. In the account given by Homer of Circe's enchantments her victims were changed entirely into swine, having "the head and voice, the bristles and the shape of swine, but their mind abode even as of yore" (*Odyssey* x, 238–40). In Milton's account of the transformation effected by Comus, only the faces of the victims are changed into the shapes of other animals. Obviously Milton's deviation from the old story is necessary for the production of the masque on the stage.

79. **Adventurous**: full of adventures or risks.

83. **Of Iris' woof**: of material of the rainbow. Iris, the messenger of June, was the goddess of the rainbow. See Virgil's *Æneid*, iv, 693–705, and *Paradise Lost*, xi, 244.

88. **Nor of less faith**: nor is he less trustworthy as a friend than he is skilled as a musician.

92. **Viewless**: invisible.

93. With the entrance of Comus and his disorderly rabble (**rout**) the stately blank verse of the Attendant Spirit's prologue changes to the more animated tetrameter couplet which Milton had used in *L' Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

94–101. Milton here makes Comus adhere to the ancient theory that the earth, conceived as perfectly flat, was surrounded by an "ocean stream." Thus the sun (**the gilded car of Day**) would at sunset cool the axle of his chariot in the Atlantic stream in the west and send out rays upward towards the zenith.

98. **Slope Sun**: the setting sun, sunk beneath the horizon.

105. **Rosy twine**: entwined roses.

110. **Grave saws**: wise proverbs or maxims.

111. **Purer fire**: fire was considered by the ancients to be the purest of the four elements.

112. **Starry quire**: one of Milton's many references to the music of the spheres.

116. **Morrice**: a popular old English dance, called originally Moorish, and later Morrice, or Morris, because it was supposed to have been brought into the country from Spain, where the Moors formerly lived.

117. **Shelves**: flat ledges of rock.

121. **Wakes**: night watches or revels. The custom of holding "wakes" over the dead bodies of friends is still preserved among the Irish peasantry.

129. **Cotytto**: a Thracian goddess of debauchery.

132. **Stygian darkness**. See *L' Allegro*, 3, and note.

134. **Chair**: chariot.

135. **Hecat'**: a mysterious divinity, associated, as in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, with witchcraft and nocturnal horrors.

139. **Nice**: prudish. Look up the various meanings of this word. **Indian steep**: the sun rises in the east, in the direction of India.

141. **Descry**: reveal.

144. **Round**: a dance in which all join hands. **The Measure** which follows is described in the Cambridge manuscript of *Comus* as "a wild, rude, and wanton Antic." Such a dance, or ballet, was a traditional feature of the masque. Comus and his rout, **headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, and with their apparel glistering**, must have made a brilliant show. This may be considered as a typical anti-masque, introduced for grotesque or comic effect.

147. **Shrouds**: hiding-places.

151. **Trains**: enticements, snares. Cf. *Macbeth*, IV, iii, 118.

153. **Thus I hurl**. At this point the actor taking the part of Comus must have made a gesture as if flinging some powder into the air. Some stage device, too, may have thrown a light about his person.

154. **Spongy**: absorbing.

156. **False presentments**: imaginary pictures.

157. **Quaint habits**: strange clothes.

161. **Glozing**: flattering, deceiving.

163. **Wind me into**: gain the confidence of.

165. **Virtue**: here used in its root meaning of *power* or *strength*.

167. **Gear**: business.

168. **Fairly**: softly.

174. **Loose unlettered hinds**: rough and uncultivated rustics.

175. **Granges**: granaries.

176. **Pan**: the god of all nature, and especially of flocks and shepherds.

177. **Amiss**: in the wrong way.

178. **Swilled**: drunken.

179. **Wassailers**: revelers. The Anglo-Saxon *wes hael*, may you have good health, was, like the modern German *Gesundheit*,

a common salutation from one drinker to another; hence arose the expression, the *wassail-bowl*.

189. **Sad**: grave. **Votarist**: one who has taker a vow. **Ir palmer's weed.** A palmer was a pilgrim returned from the Holy Land and bearing a palm branch as evidence of his journey.

190. **Wain**: chariot. Try to imagine the picture sketched in these lines: a gray-hooded monk in a long dark robe follows after the wheels of the glittering chariot of the sun.

193. **Engaged**: pursued.

194. **Envious**: malicious.

203. **Perfect**: perfectly distinct.

204. **Single darkness**: unmixed darkness.

210. **May startle well**: may well startle. *Well* is used in the sense of *indeed*.

220. The Lady, seeing a gleam in the forest near her, suddenly pauses.

Song. The metrical structure and versification of this lyric is worth examination. The lines vary from dimeter to hexameter, and the rhymes fall irregularly; but the harmony of the rhythm, combined with the marvelous management of vowel sounds and the dexterous use of alliteration and assonance, gives the whole an exquisite effect. The story of Echo and Narcissus is a familiar myth. Echo, having deceived Juno, was deprived of all speech save the power to answer questions; afterwards, falling in love with Narcissus, who scorned her, she pined away until nothing was left of her but her voice. As a punishment Venus caused Narcissus to fall in love with his own reflection in a spring, and he, unable to depart from the spot, died, and was transformed into the flower which now bears his name.

231. **Airy shell**: the atmosphere.

232. **Meander's margent green**: the green banks of the river Meander, a winding stream of Phrygia in Asia Minor. From this proper name comes our verb, *to meander*.

241. **Parley**: speech.

242. **Translated**: borne aloft.

244. Notice the graceful compliment to the Lady in the lines which follow. Passages of this complimentary nature were conventional features of the masque.

247. **Vocal air**: air which carries the voice.

251. **Fall**: cadence, the sinking of tone in the voice.

253. **Sirens**: beautiful maidens who lived on an island near Sicily, and, with their sweet voices, lured mariners to their destruction upon the rocks. Ulysses saved his sailors by stopping their ears with wax, while he himself, tied securely to a mast, was able to listen to the songs in safety. Milton is alone in associating the sirens with Circe.

254. **Flowery-kirtled Naiades**: the Nymphs of streams and fountains, having garments made of or trimmed with flowers.

256. **Take the prisoned soul**: make a prisoner of the soul. This is the figure called prolepsis, in which an adjective is applied to a noun in anticipation of the action of the verb.

257–59. **Scylla**: a beautiful maiden, changed by her jealous rival, Circe, into a monster, surrounded by hissing serpents and barking dogs. She then leaped into the sea and became a rock, which was supposed to be located in the Straits of Messina between Italy and Sicily. Opposite Scylla was the terrible whirlpool, Charybdis, so placed that a vessel in avoiding one danger would fall into the other. See Virgil's *Æneid*, III, 551–60.

267. **Unless the Goddess**: Unless thou art the goddess.

273. **Extreme shift**: last resort.

277. This method of single line question and answer is imitated from the dialogue of the Greek tragedies, where it is called "stichomythia."

286. **Hit**: guess. The line is somewhat ironical.

287. **Imports their loss**: "is their loss important?"

290. **Hebe**: See *L' Allegro*, 29, and note.

291. **What time**: when.

293. **Swinked hedger**: the weary laborer or mender of hedges.

297. **Port**: bearing, its root-meaning from the Latin. The lines which follow contain compliments for the two sons of the Earl of Bridgewater.

301. **Plighted**: folded.

312. **Dingle**: a narrow valley between high hills. **Dell**: a vale among low hills.

313. **Bosky bourn**: a stream having its banks lined with bushes.

318. **Thatched pallet**: nest of woven straw.

319. **Low**: humble.

322–26. This passage is evidence of Milton's democratic

spirit. It is based on the derivation of the word **courtesy** from *court*.

329. **Square my trial**, etc.: adjust my trial, and make it within my strength to bear it.

331. This dialogue between the Brothers is really a contest in declamation, with little of the dramatic about it. Milton undertakes to contrast two different points of view: the younger brother is practical and argues on the basis of common sense; the older brother is an idealist and relies on philosophy. It is interesting to note that the two actors were twelve and ten years old respectively.

332. **Benison**: blessing.

334. **Disinherit**: dispossess or drive out.

338. **Rush-candle**: a candle with a wick made from the pith of a rush. **Wicker hole**: a window filled in with twigs instead of with glass.

341. **Star of Arcady**: any star in the constellation of the Great Bear into which Callisto, daughter of the King of Arcady or Arcadia, was transformed. **Tyrian Cynosure**: the constellation of the Lesser Bear, by which the Tyrian mariners steered their ships. The tail of this constellation, containing the pole star, was called "Cynosura," "dog's tail." Cf. *L' Allegro*, 80.

344. **Wattled cotes**: sheep inclosures made of interwoven twigs.

345. **Pastoral reed**: a shepherd's pipe, made of reeds or oaten stalks; hence the **oaten stops**, or holes in the instrument for producing the music.

349. **Innumerous**. innumerable.

359. **Over-exquisite**: too inquisitive.

360. **Cast the fashion**: forecast the character.

361. **Grant they be so**: grant that they are really evils.

366. **So to seek**: so much at a loss.

367. **Unprincipled in virtue's book**: untaught in the elementary principles of virtue.

369. **Single want**: mere want.

376. **Seeks to** · resorts to.

378. **Plumes**: arranges.

380. **All to-ruffled**: entirely ruffled up. *To* in Old English was an intensive particle, meaning *completely*.

382. **I' the centre**: in the center of the earth.

393. **Hesperian Tree.** It was one of the twelve labors of Hercules to secure the golden apples of Juno, which were guarded carefully by the daughters of Hesperus and by the frightful dragon Ladon.

395. **Unenchanted**: that cannot be enchanted. Cf. unreprovèd, *L'Allegro*, 40.

398. **Unsunned heaps**: treasure that had been hidden in caves away from the sunlight.

401. **Wink on**: close its eyes to.

404. **It recks me not**: I take no account of.

407. **Unownèd**: unguarded.

408. **Infer**: argue.

413. **Squint**: squint-eyed.

419. **If**: equivalent to *even if*.

420. This speech of the Elder Brother's is a summing-up of Milton's idealistic philosophy. The passage contains, as Masson points out, "a concentrated expression of the moral of the whole masque." Many of the ideas here brought out are plainly borrowed from Spenser.

423. **Unharbored**: without places of shelter. **Trace**: traverse. Cf. the meaning of our word *retrace*.

424. **Infamous**: of ill fame.

428. **Very**: veritable.

429. **Shagged**: shaggy or rugged. **Horrid**: rough or bristling, from the Latin *horridus*.

430. **Unblenched**: undaunted.

434. **Unlaid ghost**: a spirit which is unappeased, and therefore wanders abroad from curfew to cock-crow.

441. **Huntress Dian**: Diana, the sister of Apollo and goddess of the hunt.

443. **Brinded**: brindled or streaked.

447. **Snaky-headed Gorgon shield.** The three Gorgons, female monsters whose heads were covered with hissing serpents instead of hair, had the power of turning into stone any one who looked at them. Perseus, aided by a magic cap, wings, and a wonderful sword, managed to cut off the head of Medusa, the mortal one of the three, and gave it to Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, who placed the snaky head in the center of her shield. There it still retained its original property of turning any one who saw it into stone. Milton gives the myth his own allegorical meaning.

451. **Dashed**: shamed.

454. **Sincerely so**: that is, entirely chaste.

459. **Oft converse**: frequent conversation.

460. **Begin**: here the subjunctive form of the verb.

468. **Imbodies and imbrutes**: becomes material and gross. This passage reproduces some of the ideas in Plato's *Phædo*.

473. **It**: to what does this word refer?

474. **Sensualty**: Milton probably chose this spelling because of the exigencies of the meter. It is more commonly *sensuality*.

478. **Apollo's lute**: Apollo, the god of the sun, was also a famous musician.

479. **Nectared sweets**: nectar was the drink of the gods.

483. **Night-foundered**: swallowed up in the night.

491. **Iron stakes**: swords.

494. **Thyrsis**: the name of a shepherd taken from the pastorals of Theocritus, the Sicilian poet. The passage which follows is a compliment to Henry Lawes, the musician, who took the part of the Attendant Spirit.

495. **Huddling**: hurrying. **Madrigal**: a shepherd's song. Notice the change, beginning with this line, from blank verse to the rhymed pentameter couplet.

501. **Next**: dearest.

502. **Toy**: trifle.

509. **Sadly**: seriously.

517. **Dire Chimeras.** The Chimera was a fire-breathing monster with the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the hind part of a dragon. Bellerophon, riding the winged Pegasus, finally managed to slay the Chimera.

520. **Navel**: center.

526. **Murmurs**: incantations.

529. **Unmoulding reason's mintage**: destroying the indications of reason stamped on or expressed in the countenance. The figure is drawn from the practice of melting down coins.

531. **Crofts**: small inclosed bits of pasture land.

532. **Brow**: overhang.

534. **Stabled wolves**: wolves in their dens.

539. **Unweeting**: unwitting, unsuspicious.

540. **By then**: when.

542. **Dew-besprent**: sprinkled with dew.

547. **Meditate my rural minstrelsy**: practice pastoral songs. For this use of **meditate**, see *Lycidas*, 66.

553. **Drowsy-flighted**: flying drowsily.

558. **Was took**: was charmed.

560. **Still**: always, ever.

568. **Lawns**: glades among the trees. See *L' Allegro*, 71, and note.

573. **Prevent**: anticipate.

585. **Period**: sentence. **For me**: so far as I am concerned.

591. **Meant most harm**: meant to be most harmful.

592. **Happy trial**: trial that ends happily.

598. **Pillared firmament**: the firmament is here pictured as resting on huge pillars supported by the earth.

603. **Griesly**: horrible.

604. **Acheron**: a river of Hades, here used for the entire region of Hell.

605. **Harpies**: A Harpy was an unclean beast, with the body of a bird and the head of a woman. Cf. *Æneid*, III, 216. **Hydras**: huge water serpents, often with many heads. One of the labors of Hercules was to slay the Lernæan Hydra.

607. **Purchase**: ill-gotten gain or booty.

610. **Emprise**: enterprise.

611. **Stead**: service. Cf. "to stand him in good stead."

620. **Of small regard to see to**: insignificant to look at.

621. **Virtuous**: having medicinal power. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 113.

626. **Scrip**: wallet.

627. **Simples**: medicinal herbs.

634. **And like esteemed**: unvalued, just as it is unknown.

635. **Clouted shoon**: patched shoes.

636. **Moly**: according to the *Odyssey*, X, 281–306, this was the plant which Hermes (Mercury), the messenger of the gods, gave to Odysseus (Ulysses) as a protection against the charms of Circe.

638. **Hæmony**: Milton invented this plant. *Hæmonia*, however, was an old name for Thessaly, the Greek land of magic.

639. **Sovran**: most efficacious.

641. **Ghastly Furies' apparition.** The Furies were the three avenging deities, who had snaky hair and carried scourges for the punishment of mortals.

646. **Lime twigs**: twigs covered with lime for the capture *of birds.*

655. **Sons of Vulcan**: an allusion to the giant Cacus, who, according to the *Æneid*, VIII, 252, vomited smoke during his combat with Hercules.

661. **Daphne**: a nymph who, when pursued by Apollo, was, at her own request, changed by her father, Peneus, into a laurel tree.

664. **This corporal rind**: the body.

672. **Cordial**: warming to the heart. **Julep**: a kind of medicinal syrup.

675. **Nepenthes**. In the *Odyssey* IV, 220, *ff.*, Helen gives her husband, Menelaus of Sparta, an opiate mixed with his wine. This had been presented to her by Polydamna, the Egyptian wife of Thon. The word *nepenthes* means, literally, "grief-dispelling."

685. **Unexempt condition**: condition from which no one is exempt.

694. **Aspects**: countenances.

698. **Vizored**: masked. **Forgery**: deceit.

700. **Lickerish**: delightful to the taste.

701. **Juno**: the queen of the gods, and the sister and wife of Jove.

707. **Budge doctors of the Stoic fur**: pedantic teachers of the Stoic philosophy. "Budge fur" was lamb's skin with the wool dressed outwards, worn to decorate a scholastic gown. The Stoics believed that virtue was the great end of living, and accordingly they were indifferent to both pleasure and pain. Naturally Comus, with his love of pleasure, would speak of the Stoics with contempt.

708. **Cynic tub**: a reference to Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher of Athens, who lived in a tub. The Cynics, like the Stoics, were taught to despise the temptations of the senses.

714. **Sate**: satisfy. **Curious**: fastidious.

719. **Hutched**: hoarded, as in a chest or bin.

721. **Pulse**: peas, beans, lentils, etc.

722. **Frieze**: a coarse woolen cloth, originally imported from Friesland.

729. **Strangled**: suffocated.

732. **O'erfraught**: over-burdened.

733. **The forehead of the deep**. Probably the surface of the deep earth, not of the sea.

734. **They below**: gnomes and elves, the creatures of the lower world.

737. **Coy**: disdainful. **Cozened**: deluded.

745. **Brag**: boast.

748. **Homely features**: note the play on words.

750. **Sorry grain**: dull color. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 33, and note.

751. **Sampler**: a piece of needlework. **Tease**: to comb or card wool.

752. **Vermeil-tinctured**: vermilion colored.

760. **Bolt**: sift or refine, as the miller separates meal from bran.

768–75. This passage is an early expression of the communistic doctrines advocated by modern Socialists.

769. **Beseeming**: suitable.

780. **Enow**: enough.

791. **Dazzling fence**: brilliant argumentation, used as a fencer wields his rapier.

793. **Uncontrollèd**: uncontrollable.

794. **Rapt**: enraptured.

802. **Though not mortal**: though I am not mortal.

804. **Chains of Erebus**. In the war between Jupiter and Saturn, the latter's sons and allies, the Titans, were hurled by Jove's thunderbolts into the lower world, and were fettered there in Erebus, the place of darkness.

808. **The canon laws of our foundation**: the fundamental regulations of our society.

809. **Lees**: a reference to the mediæval theory that melancholy was the heaviest "humour" of the blood, and, settling to the bottom like the dregs of wine, sometimes caused insanity.

816–17. According to the usual custom in magic, the wand should have been reversed and the words of the charm muttered backwards, in order to undo the effects of the enchantment.

817. **Dissevering**: releasing.

822. **Melibœus**: a conventional name in pastoral poetry for any shepherd. Here it may refer to Spenser, who, in his *Faerie Queene*, II, x, 14–19, had told the story of Sabrina.

823. **Soothest**: truest.

825. **Severn stream**. The Severn River ran not far to the east of Ludlow Castle.

827. **Whilom**: of old. The story of Sabrina is related in

Milton's own *History of Britain* (1670), not, however, exactly as it is given here. The tale came originally from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Brittaniæ* (*c.* 1136). Locrine, the son of Brutus, married Gwendolen, but really loved Estrildis, by whom he had a daughter, Sabrina. When Locrine tried to divorce Gwendolen, she made war upon him, slew him, and threw Sabrina and Estrildis into the river Severn.

832. **His.** We should use *its* to-day.

835. **Aged Nereus' hall.** Nereus was the "old man of the sea," the father of the sea-nymphs, or Nereids.

836. **Lank**: drooping.

838. **Nectared lavers**: vessels filled with nectar, the drink of the gods. **Asphodel**: a flower that bloomed in the Elysian Fields.

841. **Immortal change**: change to immortality.

845. **Urchin blasts**: the mildew or blight caused by evil spirits. Mischievous elves were supposed at times to take the shape of a hedgehog or *urchin*.

846. **Shrewd**: malicious.

852. **The old swain**: Melibœus, mentioned in line 822.

863. **Amber-dropping hair**: probably yellow hair with water dropping through it.

867. The attendant Spirit now invokes Sabrina in the name of various sea and river deities, mentioning each for some specific quality.

868. **Oceanus**: the presiding deity of the ocean stream which the ancients supposed encircled the earth.

869. **Neptune**: the god of the sea after Oceanus was overthrown. See line 18, and note.

871. **Nereus**: father of the Nereids. See line 835, and note.

872. **Carpathian wizard**: Proteus, who needed a **hook** because he was a sea-shepherd, and who was a wizard, with the power of changing his shape at will. His home was on Carpathos, an island between Crete and Rhodes.

873. **Triton**: the son of Neptune and Amphitrite, and the herald of the sea, with the power, at the blowing of his horn, or **winding shell**, to quiet or raise the waves.

874. **Glaucus**: a fisherman who became a sea-god and was endowed with the gift of prophecy or soothsaying.

875. **Leucothea**: the "white goddess," who was at one time

Ino, the daughter of Cadmus. In order to escape her insane husband, Athamas, she plunged with her infant son into the sea, and was transformed into a deity. Her son (line 876) was Pelæmon, who was known as the god of harbors.

877. **Thetis**: the most beautiful Nereid and the mother of Achilles.

878. **Sirens**: see line 253, and note. Parthenope and Ligea were two of the Sirens. Parthenope's tomb was in Naples.

880. **Golden comb.** Cf. Heine's *Die Lorelei*, in which the enchantress uses a golden comb.

893. **Azurn sheen**: azure brightness.

894. **Turkis blue**: the blue turquoise. The stone was originally brought from Persia through Turkey.

897. **Printless feet**: feet that leave no print.

914. **Thrice**: charms were regularly used in combinations of three. Cf. the incantations of the witches in *Macbeth*.

916. **Venomed seat**: venomed, because enchanted.

921. **Amphitrite**: the wife of Neptune.

923. **Old Anchises' line.** The early British chroniclers tried to trace the first settlement of Britain to the Trojans. Accordingly they invented the legend that Ascanius, son of Æneas and grandson of Anchises, eventually landed in England. His son, Sylvius, was the father of Brutus and the grandfather of Locrine, who. in turn, was the father of Sabrina.

927. **Snowy hills**: the Welsh mountains among which the Severn rises.

929. **Tresses fair**: probably the foliage on the river-banks.

936–37. May thy head be crowned here and there along thy banks with groves of myrrh and cinnamon. Such groves hardly fit the climate of Wales.

958. The Attendant Spirit here interrupts the rustic dancing which has been going on since the change of scene.

961. **Other trippings.** The rustic dance is now to be followed by a court ballet of lighter toes.

964. **Mincing Dryades**: graceful wood-nymphs, contrasted with the country folk whose dance is one of duck and nod.

970. **Timely**: in good time.

972. **Assays**: trials.

976. In the actual production of the masque, lines 976–1011 *were transferred* to the beginning, where they were given by *the Attendant Spirit* before his blank verse prologue.

982. **Hesperus**: see line 393, and note.

983. **Golden Tree**: the tree which bore the golden apples.

984. **Crispèd**: curled. The leaves are curled or ruffled by the breeze.

985. **Spruce**: neatly dressed.

991. **Nard and cassia**: aromatic plants.

995. **Purfled**: fringed.

999. **Adonis**: a beautiful young shepherd beloved by Venus. He was slain by a wild boar.

1002. **Assyrian queen**: Astarte, here identified with Venus.

1005. **Celestial Cupid**: a type of heavenly love as contrasted with Adonis, representing earthly love.

1005. **Psyche**: a girl beloved by Cupid. She was persecuted by the latter's jealous mother, Venus, but finally, after accomplishing several tasks set for her by the angry goddess, she was made immortal and united to her lover.

1012. This remaining passage constituted the concluding speech of the Attendant Spirit as the masque was actually presented.

1015. **Bowed welkin**: the curving sky.

1017. **Corners**: horns.

1021. **Sphery chime**: the music of the spheres.

1018–23. These last six lines serve to sum up the moral lesson of the complete masque.

LYCIDAS (page 58)

On August 10, 1637, Edward King, who had been a fellow-student of Milton's at Christ's College, Cambridge, was drowned while making a voyage from Chester Bay, in England, to Dublin. In accordance with a fine custom of that period, a few of King's university friends undertook to publish a memorial volume of verse. The collection appeared in 1638 in two parts: the first containing twenty-three poems in Latin and Greek; the second comprising thirteen English elegies, Milton's *Lycidas*, signed merely J. M., being the last of all.

It seems fairly certain that the death of King was not to Milton a great personal bereavement; at any rate, it was no such blow as he sustained not long after in the loss of Charles Diodati. What Milton really mourned in *Lycidas* was the premature

passing of a youth who, like Arthur Henry Hallam two centuries later, was apparently taken away on the very threshold of a promising career. As a means of voicing this regret he chose the pastoral elegy so common in classical and Renaissance literature.

In its origin, as invented by the Greek poets of Sicily, Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, the pastoral may have been spontaneous and natural. As used, however, by Virgil in his *Bucolica* and by later mediæval imitators, it was full of artificiality. Talk about country matters by sophisticated city people who had never seen a shepherd or a flock could hardly help seeming unreal and divorced from actual life. The literary form nevertheless flourished with astonishing vigor, and, during the Renaissance, was utilized by even the greatest writers: men like Petrarch, Boccaccio, Tasso, and Cervantes. From Italy it was brought into England, where, in the sixteenth century, it was taken up by Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser. Probably the most notable pastoral elegy in English before Milton's day was Spenser's *Astrophel*, commemorating the death of Sidney. Thus it was not extraordinary that Milton, steeped in the classics and acknowledging Spenser as his master, should adopt the pastoral form, and, reanimating the traditional conventions of that type of elegy, should lament for King in the guise of one shepherd weeping for another. It is interesting to note that Shelley's *Adonais* and Arnold's *Thyrsis*, the two other English elegies comparable with *Lycidas* in power and perfection, are both cast in the pastoral mould.

Milton in general follows rather strictly the procedure of the classical elegists; but there are two rather long digressions, one on Fame, and the other on the corruption of the English clergy. It has been maintained that this latter passage, dealing with the denunciatory speech of "the Pilot of the Galilean Lake," detracts from the unity of the poem; but the impassioned fervor and plain sincerity of the lines, together with the easy transition of thought which introduces them, make them appear like intrinsic and necessary parts of the poem. At this point the writer is almost a controversialist, and the Milton of *Lycidas* is not far removed from the fiery pamphleteer of the Commonwealth.

"There cannot be better verse than *Lycidas*," says Mr. Saints-

bury, echoing the thoughts of many previous critics. There is little need of adding a word to sustain his judgment. In harmony of feeling and expression, in perfection of phrasing, in exquisite polish and finish, it is, indeed, what Mark Pattison termed it, "the high-water mark of English Poesy and of Milton's own production."

1. **Once more.** Since the date of *Comus* (1634), Milton had written little or no poetry, but now, on this "sad occasion," he was to try his powers again. The Laurel, the Myrtle, and the Ivy were, among the Greeks, symbolical of poetical skill.

2. **Brown**: dark. **Never sere**: never withered and therefore evergreen.

3. **Harsh and crude**: sour and unripe.

5. **Shatter**: scatter. **Before the mellowing year**: before the due season. Milton means that bitter constraint has compelled him to write before he is really ready.

6. **Sad occasion dear**: *dear* is here used as an intensive, and the phrase therefore means "an extremely sad occasion."

8. **Lycidas**: a shepherd's name found in Theocritus, *Idyl* VII, and in Virgil, *Eclogue* IX. **Ere his prime**: King was only twenty-five at the time of his death.

10–11. **He knew himself to sing**: he knew how to compose verses. King had written some Latin poems of no very great merit.

13. **Welter to the parching wind**: be tossed about by the waves, exposed to the parching wind.

14. **Meed**: tribute.

15. **Sisters of the sacred well**: the Muses, who were born and dwelt near the Pierian Spring at the foot of Mount Olympus, the seat of Jove. This address to the Muses was a conventional feature of the pastoral elegy.

19. **Muse**: here used to mean *poet*.

20. **Lucky**: auspicious. Milton hopes that some future poet will write verses in honor of him, as he is now doing in honor of King.

23. In describing his association with King at Christ's College, Milton uses pastoral imagery, feigning himself and King to be shepherds and telling of their occupations in the same veiled fashion.

28. **Grey-fly**: the trumpet-fly, which hums loudly at noon, during the sultry period of the day.

29. **Battening**: feeding or fattening.

31. **Sloped his westering wheel**: had turned the wheel of his chariot downwards towards the west.

33. **Tempered to the oaten flute**: attuned to the shepherd's pipe.

34. **Satyrs**: forest deities with goat-like ears, cloven feet, and short tails. **Fauns**: creatures, half men and half goats, who frolic in the woods.

36. **Damœtas**: a name found in Theocritus, *Idyl* VI, and also in Sidney's *Arcadia*. It may possibly refer to Chappell, Milton's first tutor at Cambridge.

40. **Gadding**: straggling.

41. **Mourn**: a fine example of the so-called "Pathetic Fallacy," in which Nature is supposed to bewail a favorite of hers.

45. **Canker**: the canker-worm.

46. **Weanling**: recently weaned.

48. **White-thorn**: hawthorn.

50–55. This passage is modeled closely on other earlier pastorals, including Theocritus, *Idyl* I, 66–69; Virgil, *Eclogue* X, 9–12; and Spenser, *Astrophel*, XXII.

52. **Steep**: some identified mountain in Wales.

53. **Druids**: the priests of the ancient Celtic religion.

54. **Mona**: the island of Anglesey, off the northwest coast of Wales, where the Druids once held their mystic rites.

55. **Deva**: the river Dee, separating Wales from England. King must have sailed down it on his voyage from Chester. It is called a wizard stream because of many superstitious connected with it.

56. **Fondly**: foolishly. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 6. The word is explained by the for what of line 57.

58. **The Muse herself**: Calliope, the Muse of History and the mother of Orpheus, the famous musician. The first part of the story of Orpheus has been told in *L' Allegro*, 149, and note. Because he refused to join in the Bacchic orgies, he was later torn in pieces by the Thracian women, — the rout that made the hideous roar, — who cast his lyre and his head into the river Hebrus. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, VII, 33–36.

64. **What boots it?**: of what use is it? **Uncessant**: incessant. The passage which this line introduces is the first of the two digressions in the poem.

65. The homely, slighted, Shepherd's trade: the humble and neglected profession of poetry.

66. Strictly meditate the thankless Muse: devote one's self assiduously, as Milton had done, to the writing of verse — a thankless task.

67. As others use: as others are accustomed to do.

68–69. Amaryllis and Neæra are the names of shepherdesses in pastoral poetry. Milton means: "Would it not be better to live a life of ease and pleasure?"

70. Clear: noble or illustrious, from the Latin *clarus*.

71. That last infirmity, etc.: the weakness which the noble mind is likely to put away last of all.

73. Guerdon: reward.

75. Blind Fury: a reference to Atropos, one of the three Fates, whose duty it was to cut short the thread of life. She is supposed to act as relentlessly as one of the Furies.

76. But not the praise: although the Fates may destroy life, fame remains.

77. Phœbus: Apollo, the god of poetry. **Touched my trembling ears**: the god reminds the poet of something the latter has forgotten.

79. Glistering foil: foil was gold or silver leaf placed behind a gem to display its lustre. Fame is not set off by the glittering tinsel of flattery.

81. By: probably by means of.

83. Pronounces lastly: gives a final decision.

85. Fountain Arethuse: the fountain of Arethusa was located on the island of Ortygia, near Sicily. Here it is used as symbolical of the Sicilian pastoral poetry of Theocritus and other Greek writers.

86. Smooth-sliding Mincius: the river Mincius near Mantua, where Virgil was born, is here taken to represent Latin pastoral poetry, of the type found in Virgil's *Eclogues*.

87. That strain: Apollo's speech in lines 76–84. **Higher mood**: a nobler type of music.

89. The Herald of the Sea: Triton, the son of Neptune, is sent by his father to make an investigation into the causes of the death of Lycidas.

91. Felon winds: guilty winds, because they are supposed to have been responsible for the wreck of King's vessel.

96. **Hippotades**: Æolus, the son of Hippotes. He was the god of the winds, and it was his duty to keep them closely confined.

99. **Panope**: one of the Nereids, the fifty daughters of Nereus.

101. **Built in the eclipse.** Anything done during an eclipse, especially during an eclipse of the moon, was regarded by the ancients as doomed to misfortune. This line implies that the ship foundered because it was unseaworthy. Other accounts, however, make it clear that it struck on a rock during a gale.

103. **Camus**: the presiding deity of the river Cam and of Cambridge University, where King and Milton were educated. **Went footing slow**: a reference to the slow current of the stream.

106. **Sanguine flower inscribed with woe**: the hyacinth. Apollo, during a game of quoits, accidentally hit and killed Hyacinthus, a Greek boy. Overcome with grief, the god caused a flower marked with the Greek *Ai, ai* (Alas, alas!), to spring up from the blood; hence, the epithet **sanguine**. The sedge, or coarse river grass, on the banks of the Cam, is here said to be marked in a peculiar fashion not unlike the hyacinth.

107. **Pledge**: child.

109. **The Pilot of the Galilean Lake**: see *Luke*, v, 3-12. St. Peter, Christ's representative, is symbolical of the Church. This line opens the second digression. King had been preparing to enter the ministry; this fact is a logical reason for comparing him with the corrupt clergy of Milton's time.

110. **Massy keys**: St. Peter had been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven (*Matthew*, xvi, 19). **Metals twain**: the Bible does not mention this detail, but Dante (*Purgatorio*, x) describes the angel of St. Peter as bearing "two keys of metal twain."

111. **Amain**: with force.

112. **Mitred**: bearing a mitre, or bishop's headdress. Milton is thinking of Peter as the first Bishop of the Church.

113. For an interesting study of the passage which follows, see Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, 20–23.

115. **Creep**: to enter by cunning and intrigue. **Intrude**: insolently force their way in. **Climb**: to labor ambitiously for their own ends to reach high office.

118. **The worthy bidden guest**: the faithful and conscientious clergyman.

119. **Blind mouths**: greedy and gluttonous leaders, blind to everything spiritual.

120. **Aught else the least**: anything else.

122. **What recks it them?**: what do they care? **They are sped**: they are taken care of.

123. **When they list**: when it is their pleasure. **Lean and flashy songs**: insipid and showy sermons.

124. **Scrannel**: squeaking.

126. **Swoln with wind**: filled with false doctrine. **Rank**: unwholesome.

128. **The grim Wolf**: the Church of Rome, which at this period was gaining many converts. **With privy paw**: secretly.

130. **That two-handed engine**: the word **engine** probably means an axe or some instrument of destruction. The phrase has given rise to many interpretations, but the general meaning is clear enough: that retribution of a severe kind is about to descend on the Church because of its corruption.

132. **Return, Alpheus**: the poet, conscious of his long digression, here goes back to his lamenting. **Alpheus**: the lover of Arethusa. He was changed into a river that he might pass under the sea and pursue her. In taking up the pastoral strain a second time, Milton here calls upon Alpheus, just as, after his first digression, he had addressed Arethusa in line 85. **The dread voice**: the speech of St. Peter, just concluded.

133. **Shrunk thy streams**: St. Peter's denunciation has dried up for a time the stream of pastoral poetry in the poem.

136. **Use**: are accustomed to dwell.

138. **Swart star**: the dog-star, Sirius, which, during July and August, rises at the same time as the sun. It was therefore supposed to cause the heat of those months (dog-days). It is called **swart** because it makes the fields swarthy or dark. **Sparely**: rarely.

139. **Quaint enamelled eyes**: curious glossy blossoms.

142. **Rathe**: early. This is the obsolete positive form of our modern word *rather*, which is in origin a comparative. **Forsaken**: it blooms early and, therefore, gets little sunlight.

143. **Crow-toe**: the plant commonly known as "crow-foot."

144. **Freaked**: spotted.

151. **Laureate hearse**: the tomb decked with laurel in honor of the dead poet.

153. **Dally with false surmise**: let us imagine that the body of Lycidas is strewn with flowers, while actually it is being washed away by the sea.

156. **Stormy Hebrides**: wild islands, west of Scotland, and north of the spot where King was drowned.

158. **Monstrous**: peopled with monsters.

159. **Moist vows**: prayers accompanied with tears.

160. **The fable of Bellerus old**: the fabled abode of Bellerus, a Cornish giant invented by Milton. The Roman name for Land's End was Bellerium.

161. **The great Vision of the guarded mount**: a reference to St. Michael's Mount on the southern coast of Cornwall near Land's End; at the summit is a seat called St. Michael's chair, where, on several occasions, the Vision of St. Michael, the Archangel, is said to have been seen on guard.

162. **Namancos and Bayona's hold.** Namancos was a fortress in the Spanish province of Galicia, and the city of Bayona, with its castle or hold, was near by. Both are directly south of Land's End, and St. Michael is thus made to look across at England's ancient enemy, Spain.

163. **Angel**: St. Michael. **Ruth**: pity.

164. **O ye dolphins**: a reference to the story of Arion, a famous singer, who was cast overboard by pirates, but was borne ashore by dolphins whom he had charmed by his playing on the lyre.

166. **Your sorrow**: the object of your sorrow.

168. **The day-star**: the sun.

169. **Repairs**: revives.

170. **Tricks his beams**: dresses anew. **New-spangled ore**: freshly shining gold.

176. **Unexpressive**: inexpressible. **Nuptial song**: see Revelation, XIX, 7–9.

184. **In thy large recompense**: as a large recompense to thee.

186–93. These last lines form one of the most perfect examples of the Italian *ottava rima*, or octave stanza, in English. Milton is here speaking in his own person, commenting on the elegy which has just been finished.

188. **Stops**: the holes in a pipe or quill by which the sound is regulated.

189. **Doric lay**: pastoral song. Theocritus and the other Sicilian pastoral writers had used the Doric Greek dialect.

190. **Stretched out all the hills**: made long shadows of the hills.

192. **Twitched**: drew tightly about him.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

To the teacher of long experience the questions and comments which follow will not be necessary. Such a teacher will easily frame his own. But those who are just entering upon the work, and those who have had little experience, may find here a mode of attack which they can employ. Pupils, also, engaged in independent study may here find suggestively illustrated the sort of questions which thoughtful and intelligent study should enable them to answer. These questions and comments, it should be understood, are offered merely as types; they are not meant to be comprehensive.

L'ALLEGRO

TURN to *Il Penseroso* and note the similarity in the first lines; the joyful man orders the thoughtful man to depart, and the thoughtful man orders the joyful man to depart; or, to phrase it more concisely, each wishes its opposite away. Note in each separate poem the varied stories about the parentage of L' Allegro and of Il Penseroso. Who, according to each of these stories, is the father; who the mother?

Line 3. Why does L' Allegro speak so disparagingly of the place where Melancholy was born? In imagining this place, to what senses does Milton make his appeal? Is it true that the majority of sensory images make their appeal to the eye? A sensory

image may be understood to be simply the imagined sensation which comes to the mind of the reader or listener when he sees or hears words which make appeal to any one of the five senses, — *sight*, *hearing*, *feeling*, *smell*, and *taste*.

Line 6. Of what are the wings of darkness jealous?

Line 7. Why does Milton select the night-raven?

Line 9. Does the single detail, *ragged locks*, enable you to create a picture of Il Penseroso as conceived by L' Allegro?

Line 11. Note how the word *but* here serves to introduce the contrasting picture.

Lines 14–24. What artistic advantage is gained by introducing two stories of the birth of Cheerfulness? Would one be more satisfying because we could more easily pin our poetic faith to that one; or is something gained by this luxuriating in fancy?

Line 24. *Buxom*, *blithe*, *debonair*. Find three contrasting adjectives used in the next poem descriptive of Il Penseroso.

Lines 26–36. List the companions of L' Allegro and contrast them with the companions of Il Penseroso.

Line 31. In what case are *Sport* and *Care*?

Line 35. Why right hand?

Line 42. Do you like the figure of the lark startling the dull night?

Line 52. Is this humorous, or merely vivid?

Lines 53–55. As you read this do you have a particular landscape in mind, or is the image a vague, composite one?

Lines 60 ff. Note particularly the sensory images in

this portion. To what senses is the appeal strongest? Do you find it just as easy to call up a sound image as you do to call up a sight image? Can you really hear the plowman whistling, the milkmaid singing, the mower whetting his scythe? Does your imagination go further, and do you, almost unconsciously, see the plowman at work, do you hear the chains rattle, do you hear the soft, crunching tread of the horses? In the case of the milkmaid, do you catch the sound of the milk streaming into the tin pail? Or do you get these now only because these questions have suggested them?

Line 70. Put this in its natural prose order and substitute the antecedent for the pronoun *it*.

Lines 71 ff. In what case are the words *lawns, fallows, mountains?* What other nouns are in the same construction?

Line 77. Antecedent of *it?*

Line 79. Is Milton thinking merely of the abstract beauty resident in the landscape, or is he thinking of something concrete, — a pretty girl with whom most of the neighboring swains are in love? Did Milton intend anything humorous?

Line 83. Is Corydon a man or a woman? What about Thyrsis? You will find the answer in a classical dictionary. At the same time, look up Phyllis and Thestylis.

Line 89. Comment on the seasons that Milton has in mind.

Lines 101 ff. In a similar gathering in the country now, do you think it likely that such stories would be told? Why, or why not? If not, can you think of the

sort that would more likely be told? Are we more or less imaginative than the generation of Milton's time?

Line 117. Do you find this picture more pleasing to you personally than are others in the poem? If not this one, which one? Can you account for your preference, or is it simply a taste which is to you inexplainable? Are most readers more impressed by the pomp and formality of life, or by the simple and the commonplace?

Line 129. Are youthful poets more likely to dream of pomp, feast, revelry, mask, and pageantry?

Line 131. Do you think L' Allegro would ever prefer tragedy? Why, or why not? Comment on the ending of the poem.

Line 135. Commence here and read the remaining portion aloud, and thus try to catch the melody of the verse.

Run through the poem and select such adjectives as are used with particularly good effect. Why do you consider the effect good? Are some good because they are vivid, some because they are sonorous? Illustrate. Treat other parts of speech similarly.

Oral and Written Theme Assignments for L' Allegro

1. *Lines* 1–10. With the few details descriptive of the appearance of Melancholy as a basis, describe fully her appearance as you imagine L' Allegro to conceive her.

2. Imagining yourself to be L' Allegro, write a letter to Melancholy expressing your scorn of her. Be careful that the scornful tone does not exceed the spirit of scorn expressed by Milton.

3. Imagining yourself to be L' Allegro, write an informal

letter to your friend Jest (line 26) inviting him to visit you. Tell him of all the enjoyments in which you want him to share, — especially those mentioned in lines 34, 41, 55, 69, 92, 100, 117, 125, 130, and 136.

4. As an oral theme, choose certain lines (e. g., lines 116–124) and narrate an imagined incident taking place under the described conditions.

5. My First Impressions of *L' Allegro*.

IL PENSEROSO

Now that you have carefully worked through *L' Allegro*, you should, in your study of *Il Penseroso*, note all comparisons and contrasts between the two poems. You will notice, for example, the similarity in the introduction, and in the meter. Such details as the introduction of the *lark* in *L' Allegro* and the contrasting use of the *nightingale* in *Il Penseroso;* L' Allegro's walking *not unseen*, Il Penseroso's walking *unseen;* L' Allegro's enjoyment of *comedy*, and Il Penseroso's enjoyment of *tragedy*, — these are but a few of the points. Make a complete written list both of the comparisons and of the contrasts.

Line 3. Is it true that joy avails little, or is this but the biased judgment of Melancholy?

Line 9. Alike in what particular?

Lines 13–16. Does this remind you of any experience in the life of Moses? Do you think the scriptural story was in Milton's mind when he wrote this?

Lines 31–45. Do you think this description sufficiently detailed so that two artists, taking these as the base of their inspiration, would produce almost

identical pictures? In your own case what do you conceive as the most essential elements in the re-creation of the picture of Il Penseroso as here conceived by Milton? Do these essential elements reside in the robings, in the perfection of physical form, in the facial expression, or where? Contrast the suggested charm of this picture with the suggested repulsiveness of the picture L' Allegro suggests in her phrase *ragged locks*.

Line 43. What art is here suggested?

Line 44. As fast as what?

Lines 45–53. Comment on the appropriateness of these companions and contrast them with the appropriateness of the companions of joy.

Lines 67–72. Read this passage over several times, and try to understand the charm of the lines. Does a part of the charm seem to lie in the sonorousness of the words and in the reflected carefulness of Milton's observation of detail? And is a part due to the vagueness of the heavenly scene, — the atmosphere of limitless extent? Can you cite in other poems you have studied examples of this latter suggestion?

Line 76. Note that here the sound suggests the sense — *onomatopeia*, we call it.

Lines 79, 80. Just what sort of picture do these lines suggest?

Line 82. This line gave Charles Dickens the title for his famous story. Can you think of other cases where lines in poetry have furnished authors titles for their stories?

Lines 91 ff. Make a list of the reading Il Penseroso may have done. Why would you include the Greek dramatists? What various types of literature ought

your complete list to contain? What types of prose? What types of poetry?

Line 120. This line is usually interpreted as referring to allegory. Argue for or against this interpretation.

Line 123. Why *not* tricked?

Line 126. Is there anything incongruous in this—*While rocking winds are piping loud?* Would it have been more in harmony with the other lines if the winds had been conceived as carrying a low moan? Or is the tempestuous suggestion entirely appropriate?

Line 130. Is the word *min'-ute* or *mi-nute'?* Mass your arguments to prove your point?

Line 139. Study the method which Milton employs to bring about this air of quiet solitude.

Line 146. Just what does the epithet *dewy-feathered* as applied to sleep suggest to you? Study the other compound epithets in Milton and make some appropriate comment upon them.

Lines 155 ff. Do Milton's words suggest the attitude of a Puritan? Do you know whether this poem was written before or after Milton had identified himself with Cromwell? Anyway, do you here think that he shows a sympathetic attitude toward ecclesiasticism? What ideas here suggest even a sympathetic attitude toward asceticism?

Now that you have read both of the complementary poems, are you ready to express any decided preference? Will your enjoyment of either be affected by the particular mood in which, while reading, you chance to be? Are you similarly disposed toward musical themes? In a sad mood do you wish sad music,

or vice versa? In what mood, then, would you most enjoy *L' Allegro?*

Oral and Written Theme Assignments for Il Penseroso

1. Imagining yourself Il Penseroso, write a reply to the letter you imagine L' Allegro to have written in accordance with the second suggestion above. (Or the teacher may assign to one half the class the letter of L' Allegro, and to the other half the reply of Il Penseroso. Again the warning should be given against untempered scorn.)

2. *Lines* 30–44. With these details as a basis, write a complete description of Il Penseroso viewed in this friendly light.

3. For an oral theme let each member of the class imagine himself Il Penseroso, and in that character tell of one particular kind of enjoyment in which he finds special delight. Encourage each pupil to depart from the details of the poem, but under no circumstance to depart from the spirit. For example, Il Penseroso might tell of the enjoyment secured from attending a symphony recital in which the dominating tone was that of sadness. Or one pupil could tell of his feelings while witnessing a modern play.

4. *Line* 30. Let some pupil read up in Keats' *Hyperion* or in a classical dictionary the struggle between Cronus and Jove, and give orally such a detailed account as will make clear the full significance of this line.

5. *Line* 82. Assign to some capable pupil a theme with this title — *Fiction Titles from Poetic Phrases.* E. g., Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd,* taken from Gray's *Elegy:* —

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, etc.

COMUS

Read carefully the introduction to *Comus* on page 82 in order to get clearly in mind the essential features *of a mask.* Without a knowledge of the conventional

requirements, the significance of some of the passages would not be understood. It is also important that before these questions are considered the whole mask should be read.

Line 1. The moment we commence reading the speech of the attendant spirit we naturally form some conception of his looks and his attire. What specific details later mentioned help us in our notions?

Line 12. In mentioning *some*, whom does the spirit have in mind? Is the spirit here thinking of special individuals, or of a vague, general group?

Line 16. Do you imagine that the spirit is taking any pleasure in his task, or is he approaching it with reluctance?

Line 41. In learning that the attendant spirit is under command of Jove, does the reader begin to give more or less credence to the words of the spirit? Does he give so much credence that later, when the Lady is in danger, he is little concerned by the danger, feeling confident that the supernatural power of the spirit will save her? If by this the suspense is wholly relieved, is the interest consequently lessened? As the story progresses do you gain, or lose, confidence in the spirit?

Line 55. Syntax of *youth?*

Line 75. Can you think of any other place in literature where a similar change is supernaturally effected?

Line 84. What motive can the spirit have in this change of costume? Can you imagine his going through the mask in his own identity? If he is to be disguised, is it essential that the reader (or the audience) should be let into the secret?

Line 93. When Comus enters have we accepted as wholly true what the attendant spirit has said, or

do we wish to judge the reveler from a wholly impartial standpoint? Should we be glad to learn that the spirit's judgment is entirely wrong? Or do we, from the first, know him as the villain of the piece? What general comment can you make concerning our willingness or our unwillingness to believe that the opinions uttered by one character about another are true? From the words Comus himself utters, what opinion do you form? Do you conclude that he is merely fun-loving or positively wicked? Is he interesting? Is he poetical; or is Milton guilty of incongruity in putting this verse into his mouth?

Line 144. If you were a stage manager directing this mask, how long would you have this measure (dance) continue? Could you omit it entirely and still keep up the convention of the mask?

Line 146. By what means is Comus enabled to detect the presence of the *chaste footing?*

Line 148. Do you think the Lady would be most frightened by the *numbers?* Why does Comus say *numbers?*

Lines 153, 154. Do you imagine that anything is really *hurled?* Which would make the more dramatic effect — real or imagined magic dust?

Line 157. How do you think Comus should be costumed? Should the costume be pretty? elaborate? grotesque?

Line 170. Comment on the most appropriate costume for the Lady. As she enters are we predisposed in her favor? Why? Is Comus in the least responsible for our attitude?

Line 185. Comment on the action of the brothers in leaving the sister alone.

Lines 188–190. Study this figure until each detail stands out in bold outline — the costume of the votarist, the direction in which he was going, the appearance of the landscape, etc.

Lines 198, 199. Do you like this figure, or not? Do you think of any Biblical passage that might have suggested to Milton the phrasing here?

Line 205. How intensely does the audience feel the Lady's anxiety?

Line 226. Why does the Lady say this? Why do you suppose Milton makes her sing? Is there anything particularly appropriate in the song, or do you suppose Milton was more interested in the tune and cared little for the words?

Lines 244–264. To whom are these lines spoken?

Line 244. When Comus reappears, how do you think he is costumed? Would it be better to have him costumed just as he was before, and thus force the audience to remember that the Lady sees him in the garb of a shepherd; or would it be more effective to have the change in costume actually take place while Comus is concealed? Are there advantages in both devices? Is it possible that one method would best fit the conditions in Milton's time and another method best fit our time? Which would best fit our time?

Line 246. Is there anything incongruous in Milton's making Comus quickly perceptive of the holiness in the Lady? Or is it entirely natural that the unholy Comus would recognize holiness in another? Does virtue most readily perceive its like or its opposite?

Lines 251, 252. Express in unfigurative language the effect of this song.

Lines 252–264. Express in your own language the contrast between the effect upon Comus of Circe's songs and the Lady's song.

Line 263. Study the phrase *sober certainty of waking bliss*, and then explain it.

Lines 266–268. Did Comus regard the Lady as a goddess or as a mortal?

Lines 277 ff. What is the effect of this parallel (stychomythic) verse? Is it effective in helping to set Comus and the Lady in conflict, even though the words spoken are not antagonistic?

Lines 291–303. What purpose does Comus have in mind in making this speech about the appearance of the brothers? Does the speech give the Lady confidence in Comus?

Lines 331–342. Just where do you imagine the brothers to be? If you are convinced that the Elder Brother is not much disturbed about the safety of his sister, what would you name as the cause of his anxiety? You can see that he would like to be relieved from his present circumstances. Note that the Elder Brother wants to see something solacing, the Second Brother wants to hear something. What later phrase of the Elder Brother refers to these two notions?

Lines 331–490. The conversation of the brothers here is in the nature of a debate, the main points centering around this question: *Resolved, that virtue is its own protector.* In this debate the Elder Brother argues for the affirmative, the Second Brother for the negative. Which side do you think is more strongly presented? Is this due to the natural strength of the side, or to the skill of the debater? Do you think all *the philosophizing* natural to *unrazored* lips?

Lines 362, 363. What current proverb expresses the same idea?

Lines 375–380. Divorce this idea from the figure and put it into simple English.

Lines 381–384. Can you think of a concrete illustration of this?

Line 389. Why should Milton select a senate-house as a place particularly safe? Do you think the Second Brother makes a good point by admitting the safety of Meditation left alone, and then, by contrast, asserting the danger of Beauty left alone?

Lines 398 ff. Comment on the effectiveness of this simile.

Lines 407–409. Is there any inconsistency between this and lines 421–431?

Lines 439 ff. Does the Elder Brother strengthen his point by citing these classic stories?

Lines 476–480. Does this speech imply that the Second Brother is convinced; or does it suggest that though baffled in argument, he is willing to abandon the discussion with this final fling — mildly sarcastic?

Line 496. How can music sweeten a musk rose?

Line 506. The *to* here means *compared to.*

Lines 513–580. Read this entire, and then comment upon the effectiveness of the narration. Is it artistic to repeat what he has already said about Comus in lines 59–77? Do you think his speech helps to create the effectiveness of his disguise?

Line 571. Does this throw any light upon the question of the proper costume for Comus, or was this detail added by Thyrsis to make the account more realistic to the brothers? Cf. line 645.

Line 572. Does it seem to you that for not staying to defend the sister Thyrsis would naturally be condemned by the brothers? What defense could Thyrsis have made?

Line 602. Is the Elder Brother aroused because he now feels that his sister is in real danger, or is he indignant simply because Comus is generally dangerous? Does the Elder Brother here reveal a spirit of braggadocio, or does his resentment seem perfectly sincere? Does his tone change when he learns of the supernatural power of Comus? If you think it does, would you explain this change as a mark of wisdom or as a lack of valor?

Line 654. What part of speech is *menace?*

Line 659. Here again a considerable portion of the conversation is an argument upon a certain theme. The question under debate is, *Resolved, that the gifts of nature should be abstemiously used.* The Lady of course takes the affirmative, Comus the negative. Who has the better side of the question? As far as mere argument goes, who is the more skillful? What details are introduced with particular effectiveness? Do you find yourself so out of sympathy with Comus as a personality, that you find it impossible to judge his arguments impartially? Write out a list of the six strongest points on each side? Are all of these points effectively refuted before the debate closes? Comment on the Lady's peroration (lines 780–799).

Line 800. To whom is Comus now speaking? Is the aside effective? Is it ever effective? Why do dramatists use the device?

Line 813. Do you regard this as the most inter-

esting point in the story? Is the interest here human, or supernatural, or is the place interesting because the human and the supernatural forces here clash? Would the interest have been more dramatic if Comus had been overpowered by the three? Would there have been anything unfair in this? Whose supernatural power do you think of as the stronger — that of Thyrsis or that of Comus?

Line 823. Do you regard this use of Sabrina as effective? Could the plot have come to a satisfactory close without her? Aside from providing a means of freeing the Lady, is her presence dramatically helpful? Specify.

Oral and Written Theme Assignments for Comus

1. Discuss in oral or written themes the ideas which are severally suggested by the following questions: —

a Is *Comus* most interesting because of its plot; its characters; its supernaturalism; its poetry and song? What point in the story is most interesting? What character? What group of characters?

b Is there any humorous scene?

c Do you think the writing of a poem such as *Comus* demands a higher or a lower type of intellect than that which *L' Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* demanded? Which would you rather have written?

d If this mask were presented to-day would it be popular? Why, or why not? Could amateurs present it?

e Can you divide it into acts and scenes?

f If you were stage manager, at what places in the story would you have the curtain lowered? Or would it be necessary to lower the curtain at all?

2. Write an imaginary account of the home of the attendant spirit, lines 1–5.

3. Discuss the part which the attendant spirit plays in the story.

4. With lines 151–153 as a basis, give a description of Comus's train as you imagine it.

5. Comus's Costume.

6. The Lady's Costume.

7. A Description of the Scene where Comus and the Lady Meet.

8. Differences in the Character of the Elder and the Second Brother.

9. Why I prefer the —— Brother.

10. The Costume of Thyrsis.

11. My Conceptions of "A Certain Shepherd Lad" (line 619).

12. A Description of "The Stately Palaces" (stage direction after line 658).

13. Write a modern newspaper account describing the debate between Comus and the Lady. Let your chief concern be to make it accurate and readable.

14. My Conceptions of Melibœus (line 822).

15. The Costume of Sabrina.

This could be given as a part of a newspaper account of a modern presentation of *Comus*.

16. Imagine your own school to have presented *Comus*. Write a full account of it for your school paper. You will add interest by assigning to your several classmates the parts which each could, in your opinion, most skillfully act.

The present editor has found it feasible in some classes to attempt the writing of a mask modeled after *Comus*. The results attained have been surprising. Take some notable event — say the return of Colonel Roosevelt from his African hunt, — and place the scene in your own town. Care must be exercised in planning the anti-mask. It should be genuinely humorous, but it should not degenerate into *mere buffoonery*.

LYCIDAS

Line 10. Do you think that King's ability to write poetry made Milton's sense of loss keener?

Line 13. Is this figure too grewsome for artistic effect, or is it artistic largely because of its vividness?

Lines 19, 20. Do you think it becoming in Milton to voice this hope? Is the feeling a perfectly natural one, and do you rather admire Milton for the frankness of its avowal?

Lines 23 ff. In this prolonged pastoral image are you curious to know exactly what he means with the mention of each detail? Do you want to know, for instance, that *nursed upon the self-same hill* means that their school-life was passed together; that *fed the same flock* meant that they studied the same books? Or do you consider such a narrow interpretation faulty and far distant from a genuine poetic appreciation? If you find the former method interesting, do you think you are ingenious enough to study out a satisfactory explanation for each item? Is it perfectly natural that as Milton contemplated the shepherd life, details would appear that could have no direct parallel in student life?

Line 45. What is the subject of this sentence?

Line 50. Is Milton's attitude toward the nymphs chiding? Are they relieved from all blame? Or is it first one and then the other? Exactly what is the relationship between the nymphs and the muse who bore Orpheus?

Line 58. Milton has also mentioned Orpheus in *L' Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Do you judge from this

that Milton's knowledge of classical stories was meager, and that if he harped upon them at all he must harp on a few chords only? Or do you conclude that the Orpheus myth supplied in each of these cases the exact illustration which he wished? What impressions of the meagerness or the vastness of Milton's classical lore do his other poems supply?

Line 65. Don't forget that throughout *Lycidas* the shepherd's life is the name poetically applied to the literary life, and usually refers even more narrowly to the poetic life. In line 65, for instance, the *shepherd's trade* is the poet's art.

Line 68. This line is quite concrete; make it abstract.

Line 71. Do you consider desire for fame an infirmity? In your highest ideal of a noble mind does a desire for fame exist? Does true nobility banish self; and with self banished can there then be in the individual any residual desire for fame?

Line 72. To secure fame is it worth our while *to scorn delights and live laborious days?* Is such a sacrifice absolutely necessary to obtain fame? Can you think of any famous man who has not made just such a sacrifice?

Lines 78–84. Does Milton here imply that after all, fame is not the gift of men but the gift of gods? If this doctrine were true, would it banish the incentive for personal endeavor? Or would you interpret Milton's lines as applicable merely to the final — the eternal — reward? Does he mean that man's conception of an individual is likely to be false; that God's conception only is true?

Line 87. Higher in what sense? And why higher?

Line 91. Antecedent of *he?*

Line 92. Does this imply a fatalistic belief? Cf. lines 100–102.

Line 103. In what relationship did Milton regard King? And why?

Lines 109–131. Whether or not the inclusion of this passage in an elegy is a blemish upon what would otherwise be a piece of splendid poetic art, has long been a mooted question. Before the student attempts to decide the point for himself, he must, first of all, remember that Edward King had expected to enter the church. The sort of churchman that King would have been, contrasted with what many of the churchmen of Milton's time really were, is doubtless the impetus of this passionate speech which Milton puts into the mouth of St. Peter, the guardian patron of the church. Remembering this, the pupil will see that the passage is not, by any means, wholly irrelevant. Whether it is too vindictive to harmonize with the spirit of an elegy is a matter that the student may try to work out for himself.

Lines 132–153. Note the use which Milton proposes to make of the flowers. King's body is really in the sea, but he imagines it here before him laden with the flowers which the vales have offered. What do you think of this *false surmise?*

Line 159. Significance of *moist?*

Line 166. Can you think of other poets who voice an equally stalwart faith in immortality? Look up this point in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Matthew Arnold's *Rugby Chapel*, and any other poems that suggest themselves.

Line 168. Comment on the effectiveness of the simile.

Line 182. Why do the shepherds weep no more?

Line 190. How stretched out?

Line 194. This is frequently misquoted — *fresh fields?* Can you account for the misquotation? Is *fields* better than *woods?*

Theme Assignments

1. The Conventions of the Elegy. For hints, consult the introduction to *Lycidas* in the R. L. S. edition.
2. Write a character sketch of Edward King, using as a basis the points of the poem.
3. Compare *Lycidas* with one of the more modern elegies, — William Watson's *Lachramæ Musarum*, or Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*, for example.
4. Narrate an imaginary incident in the early lives of Milton and King.
5. Narrate an imaginary incident of their Cambridge days.
6. Write an imaginary account of their first meeting.
7. Write a letter purporting to be from King to his mother, in which the young John Milton is described.
8. Write a letter from Milton to his mother, describing Edward King.
9. Write an imaginary letter from one of Milton's Cambridge friends, in which the incident of King's drowning is detailed. Explain at the last of the letter a plan for a memorial volume, suggesting that Milton write an appropriate poem in English.
10. Write an account of the corrupt clergy of Milton's day.
11. The Difficulties of the Poem.
12. The Beauties of the Poem.
13. My Impressions on First Reading *Lycidas*.
14. The Story of Orpheus — line 58.
15. The Story of Bellerus — line 160.

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